



He cut his way through the troopers, and galloped off.

C. F.—Front.

PAGE 144.

45-

A Cavalier of Fortune

BY

ESCOTT LYNN

Author of 'Blair of Balaclava,' &c.

WITH SIX COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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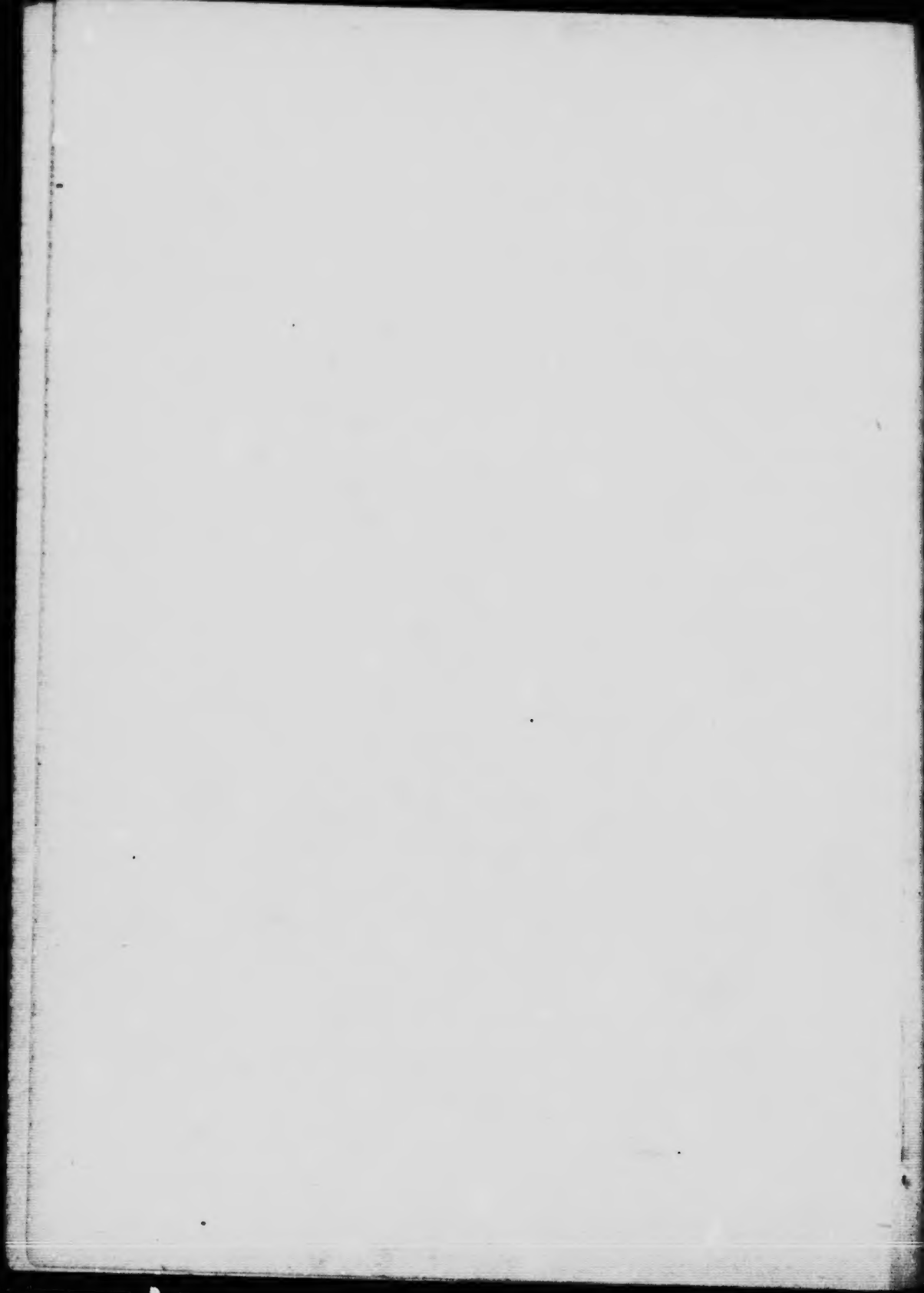
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TO
WILLIAM ERNEST GRAY, Esq.,
AS A SLIGHT ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF
THE MOST KINDLY INTEREST HE
TOOK IN THE AUTHOR'S FIRST
BOOK, THIS STORY IS
MOST CORDIALLY
DEDICATED



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W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED, LONDON AND EDINBURGH.

A Cavalier of Fortune.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE AFFAIR ON THE ST ALBANS ROAD.

'TIS a thousand pities, Aubrey, that you are not coming to London with me. Cannot you persuade Sir Nigel to alter his mind? The king wants soldiers, and I am sure my father could procure for you, as well as for myself, a place in the Life Guards.'

'Impossible, Ralph,' sighed Aubrey. 'You know that my father has certain prejudices, and designs to turn me into a simple country squire.'

'To feed pigs and drink small-beer! Faugh! I doubt whether he'll ever succeed. Depend upon it, we shall meet in London before you are three months older.'

'Let us not talk about that, Ralph,' said Aubrey, smiling at his friend's pertinacity; 'we shall soon be parting, possibly not to meet again for months or even years, so let us eschew all subjects on which we do not agree. Besides, we must spur on, for night is falling, and we have still far to ride.'

The speakers were two youths, both well mounted, and, to judge by their dress, belonging to the upper class.

Aubrey Berkeley, though only in his teens, was

tall and muscular, with brown hair which hung in curls upon his shoulders, a bronzed face, and keen gray eyes. His companion, Ralph Tresham, some two years older, was of dark complexion and ruddy countenance. Both wore high riding-boots, buff coats, and befeathered hats, and both carried long straight rapiers, supported by baldricks worn over the right shoulder.

Between the Berkeleys and the Treshams—notwithstanding the fact that the former belonged to the Reformed Church, while the latter were Catholics—an old and tried friendship existed. Aubrey and Ralph had been intimate all their lives and were warmly attached to each other. Every year they spent some weeks together either at Hurst Castle, a ruinous old place, the seat of the Treshams, or at Blackwater, the only part of the once large Berkeley estate left in the possession of Aubrey's father, Sir Nigel.

Aubrey had been staying a couple of weeks with Ralph at the latter's uncle's, near Bedford, and they were returning to their respective homes after having spent an enjoyable holiday.

As they rode along, Ralph's talk was all of the brilliant career which he hoped was in front of him in London, for James the Second was welcoming the country gentry to Court, in the hope that they would prove docile followers of his policy.

The young riders, having arrived at the place where the road to Ware crosses the Great North Road, with a hearty hand-shake separated, Ralph striking off across the heath towards Hoddesdon, near which Hurst Castle lay.

Left to himself, Aubrey touched his horse with

the spur, and cantered on for some miles, till, leaving the main road, he turned into a lane which branched towards St Albans, a mile from which was his father's house.

He had not proceeded very far along this lane when he was startled by hearing a cry, borne faintly to him upon the damp night-air. He rode on till he was within a couple of hundred yards of the end of the lane; then, reining in his horse a moment, he listened intently. Again the cry, as of some one in pain or fear, came to his ears, and while he still listened the sharp crack of a pistol rang out. Imagining that highwaymen were at work, without waiting to consider odds, Aubrey drew his sword and galloped towards the spot whence came the distressful cries.

On reaching the road, in the dim light an alarming sight met his gaze. A large coach stood with its near wheels in the ditch beside the road; the four horses attached to it were rearing and plunging, and would have bolted in terror, but that a tall, ungainly man stood at the leaders' heads, holding firmly to the bridles, the while he used soothing words to calm them.

'Woa there, beauties; woa, restrain yoursel's; another minute, and you shall go as fast as whip can urge you, I warrant!'

While the man, who spoke with a Scottish accent, was busy with the horses, several others were engaged about the coach; and a postillion, who lay in the road with his arms bound to his sides, from time to time uttered loud shouts for help.

Aubrey Berkeley's arrival upon the scene was so sudden and unexpected that he had dismounted close to the coach ere any one was aware of his presence.

A very big man, in a richly laced coat, was the first to observe him.

'Sdeath!' he cried angrily, 'we are discovered. Quick, Ferguson, leave the horses and cut this intruder down.'

'A murrain on your chattering tongue,' growled he addressed as Ferguson. 'Ye must always be babbling names; ye'd spoil in five minutes the plotting of as many weeks.'

At this moment there was a scream from inside the coach, and a lady, clad in a dark travelling-cloak, leapt from the step to the ground. She was followed by a short, slender man, whose dress, seen in the glare of the coach-lamps, bespoke him an officer of the army. He tried to seize her by the arm; but she was too quick for him, and running round to Aubrey's left side, took hold of his sword-scabbard with one hand, while she placed the other on his arm.

'Sir, I beseech your protection against these ruffians,' she cried in passionate tones. 'They have killed or wounded my servants, and would carry me off to prison, possibly to my death.'

At this instant the big man drew his weapon, and waving his companions back, cried in haughty, sneering tones to Aubrey, 'Fool! don't thrust yourself into that which may burn you—shrivel you up. This is the king's business you are thwarting.'

'What, the king of the thieves?' asked Aubrey sarcastically.

'Ay, the king of thieves and rascals, and honest men too—his Majesty King James.'

'Well, then, if this is the king's business, it's little to his credit.'

On hearing this, the tall man made a sudden thrust at Aubrey, which was skilfully parried, as was a second. Then the two engaged furiously, the sword-blades rasping and striking sparks, as Aubrey, a skilful swordsman, defended himself against the other's attack. The big man's very fury proved his undoing; for, pressing his attack blindly, he afforded an opening to Aubrey, who, after parrying a vicious thrust made at his breast, with a rapid counter-thrust, ere his adversary could recover his guard, passed his sword through his opponent's right shoulder, on which, with a cry, he staggered back towards the hedge.

Ferguson was still obliged to hold the startled horses, but two more men now came forward. Aubrey, the better to defend himself, slipped off his cloak and wound it round his left arm, the lady standing close behind him.

Without an instant's pause the two men attacked him. One was the slight gentleman who had jumped from the coach after the lady, and he fought with great fury. Aubrey had all his work cut out to defend himself, being somewhat hampered in his movements by the lady; yet in a way she was of service to him, for she prevented his enemies from thrusting at his back, for fear of hurting her, which they evidently had no intention of doing. Still, Aubrey, in spite of his skill, was getting exhausted; his wrist was losing its suppleness and his eye its quickness. The man Ferguson had calmed the horses and was coolly loading a pistol, with which he doubtless intended ending the matter. Two other ruffians, who stood looking on as though expecting every moment to see Aubrey run through, perceiving

he was holding his own, now bared their weapons and advanced to make an end of the fray.

Aubrey turning, so that the moon shone full upon his face, the bound postillion, who continued to bawl for help, cried out, 'Body o' me, 'tis Master Aubrey Berkeley of Blackwater. Take heed, Master Aubrey, two villains is a-coming at your back.'

'Ay, Master Berkeley, if that be your name,' said the short man, as he lunged, 'Blackwater shall soon wear black crape for you.'

Aubrey realised the desperate nature of the situation, and had almost given himself up for lost, when the hoofbeats of horses, ridden at full speed, sounded above the noise of conflict. It gave the attackers pause, and ere they could do anything two men galloped up to the spot.

'What means all this?' haughtily demanded one, whose rich dress bespoke him a man of rank.

'It means that these knaves attacked this lady's people, and would have carried her off,' explained Aubrey.

'Zounds! is it so?' cried the new-comer impetuously, and flashing out his rapier he spurred his horse against the disconcerted group, and scattered them right and left. They took to their heels and ran for their lives, being pursued by the cavalier.

As he clattered down the road the loud bang of a pistol, fired by Ferguson, rang out, and a ball whizzed past Aubrey, on which the second stranger, drawing a heavy broadsword, rode straight at the fellow, who, however, escaped him by leaping the hedge.

Meanwhile Aubrey was trying to calm the fears of the lady he had rescued.

'I cannot thank you sufficiently for your services,

young sir,' she said. 'Had they carried me off it would have had the gravest consequences to—to certain friends of mine.'

'I am delighted to have been of service to you,' replied Aubrey.

'Your gallantry must not go unrewarded. I trust you will give me an opportunity of thanking you at a more fitting time and season.'

'I shall always be ready to obey your commands, madam; but shall I not assist you back to your coach?'

The lady gave him her hand just as a lackey came running from somewhere, crying, 'Oh my lady, the ruffians have been dispersed, and have mounted and galloped off. I trust your ladyship has met with no harm.'

'Thanks to your bravery, I am safe,' she replied ironically. 'But see at once to the horses, and get the coach on the road again.'

'Certainly, my lady, it were as good as done.' Then, seeing the postillion still bound in the roadway, he cried, 'Gadzooks! cease your noise, man. What avails bellowing like a bull?'

'It avails more than flying and hiding in a hedge, and I doubt me if my cries were not the means of bringing the gallant Master Berkeley to our assistance.'

The horseman who had ridden at Ferguson now returned, and having dismounted, cut the postillion's bonds with his sword, sternly bade him get up, and cease his noise. There was that in the stranger's manner which commanded respect, and the postillion silently joined his fellow-servants.

Aubrey took the opportunity of observing the new-comer, and saw he was an elderly but power-

fully built man, wearing his gray hair short, and being accoutred as if for a journey. A cuirass was visible beneath the short cloak he wore, and his holsters were furnished with a pair of pistols. Altogether he had more the appearance of an old Cromwellian soldier than of aught else. Seeing that Aubrey was regarding him fixedly, he turned his keen eyes on the youth, and as he did so a slight start betrayed his surprise. This fact was not lost upon Aubrey, though the stranger immediately recovered his composure, and moved away towards the lady. Catching sight of her face, he exclaimed, 'The Lady Wentworth, as I live !'

She whom he had addressed turned quickly upon him, and apparently recognising him, cried, 'Not so loud, I pray you ; not more than half-a-dozen people know I am in England.'

As she spoke she turned a curious glance upon Aubrey, which, being observed by the elderly stranger, he said, 'The youth, then, knows nothing ?'

'He is a perfect stranger to me.'

Thinking his presence was embarrassing, Aubrey walked away towards the coach, which was now righted ; the two servants had discovered their companion, who had been wounded in the shoulder by a pistol-ball, it being the noise of that report which had first given Aubrey the alarm. The man was recovering from a faint, and his fellow-servants were tending him.

At that moment the first cavalier returned from his unsuccessful chase of the attackers.

As he approached the lady she looked up at him, then holding out her hand, cried, 'Good coz, is it indeed you ?'

The horseman slid from his saddle.

'Henrietta,' he replied, 'this is most fortunate. Some one has played us false, and your arrival got known. A trusty friend warned me that something like this might be attempted, and I set off at once to frustrate it. Have you the papers safe?'

'Quite.'

'That makes our heads firmer upon our shoulders then; the scoundrels who attempted your capture have, however, unfortunately all escaped, though Sunderland will not dare move openly in the matter after having employed such cut-throats to attain his end. But I presume this is the gentleman to whom we are all indebted for his gallant defence of you till we arrived?' and, turning to Aubrey, he doffed his plumed hat and made a deep bow.

'Sir,' he continued, 'I know not to whom I am indebted; but Lady Wentworth and her cousin Lord Lovelace tender you their very sincere and hearty thanks. From this moment count me as your friend, and be assured that I only wait to learn your name to place my house, my service, and my purse at your disposal.'

To this speech, uttered with that fluent grace which distinguished the cavaliers of the Court of the second Charles, Aubrey replied a little bashfully, 'My lord, I am Aubrey, son of Sir Nigel Berkeley of Blackwater, and I am delighted to have been of service to your cousin.'

At this instant a deep groan was heard from behind them, and Lord Lovelace ran to the hedge, where the man whom Aubrey had run through the shoulder was still lying.

Bending down, Lovelace turned him round, so that the moonbeams fell upon his face.

'As I live, 'tis lying Dick Talbot,' he cried.—'So, swashbuckler, you fill your pockets by doing Sunderland's dirty work, do you? I might have guessed you did not come by your guineas honestly.'

A curse from the wounded man was the only reply.

'Ay, you are well known as a swearer, Talbot, as well as a liar, which in this case is an advantage, for few will believe you when you do tell the truth. Hark ye, I know not how much you have heard of our conversation; but if you repeat one word of it I will set my lackeys to slit your nose and clip your ears.'

'Insolent hound!' gasped Talbot, 'I will yet be even with you and with that rogue,' looking at Aubrey.

'He has already given you your deserts; and as you have, after all, some pretence to gentle blood, you will ever find John Lovelace ready to meet you, when and where you please.'

With these words Lovelace turned away. 'Let the dog lie there all morning,' he said coldly; 'he is in no danger, and 'twill cool his venom somewhat.'

By that time the carriage was again ready for travelling, and Lady Henrietta having resumed her seat, and the wounded servant been placed inside, all was ready for a start.

'Mr Berkeley,' said Lord Lovelace, 'we are riding to Toddington, distant yet many miles; there is still some danger of a second ambush. Can I prevail upon your generosity to ride a few miles with us?'

Aubrey at once consented, and he and Lovelace went on some hundred yards ahead of the carriage.

As they rode, Lord Lovelace said, 'I fear me, Mr Berkeley, you have made an enemy in Talbot, and, unfortunately, he has learnt your name; however, to counteract his enmity, I offer you my friendship. If you ever come to London, what influence I have at Court shall be yours.'

To this Aubrey made a suitable reply, when Lovelace said, 'I will not insult your intelligence, Mr Berkeley, by saying that it is best to keep this affair quite secret. I trust you will repeat to no one what you have seen.'

'I will mention no word of it, save, of course, to my father, and he is absolutely to be depended upon,' replied Aubrey.

The conversation then turned upon the burning questions of the day, Lovelace somewhat artfully trying to get from Aubrey some indication of his views upon them. But Aubrey was a discreet youth, and was extremely guarded in his remarks; there was something of mystery about the adventure in which he had just been engaged; he felt there was something behind it which he could not understand, and the feeling was strengthened when, some few miles farther on, a hoarse challenge from in front rang out, and Lovelace, bidding Aubrey halt, rode forward alone.

In the dim moonlight it was clear that several horsemen, all, judging from an occasional steely glitter, well armed, were talking with Lovelace. Presently that nobleman came trotting back.

'Mr Berkeley,' said he, 'I will trouble you to ride

no farther with us. You have rendered me to-night a greater service than you may imagine. Depend upon it, an opportunity to repay you will arise, and then you will not find me ungrateful.'

He shook Aubrey warmly by the hand, then, rejoining the men in front, he rode off with them.

Turning his horse's head once more towards St Albans, Aubrey started on his homeward ride. As he passed the coach, he glanced keenly at the Cromwellian-looking figure who rode behind it, and then spurred on, determining when he reached the place where they had left the wounded Talbot to render him what assistance lay in his power. But when at last he drew rein at the spot where the coach had been attacked, to his relief no less than to his surprise, he found that the man he had wounded had disappeared.

CHAPTER II.

HOW AUBREY WENT OUT INTO THE WORLD.

MIDNIGHT had long since chimed from the clock tower of St Albans Abbey when Aubrey reached Blackwater. The clanging of the porter's bell announced to old Middleton, the lodgekeeper, that some one desired admittance. Gaining an entrance without disturbing any other member of the household, Aubrey proceeded to his own room, and was soon sound asleep. The sun shining on his face, and the presence of his father in the room, awoke him.

Sir Nigel Berkeley was a tall, white-haired cavalier of the old school, and was dressed in the graceful style of the preceding reign.

As Aubrey sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes his father said, 'My son, you returned late last night. I began to think some evil had befallen you.'

'I crave pardon, father; but the fault was not wholly mine. I met with an adventure, and would speak with you on the matter, for I fear it may lead to trouble.'

His father seating himself on a chair near the window, Aubrey related the adventure of the previous night. Sir Nigel sat silent for a few seconds, then said, 'Tis a strange tale, Aubrey, and one at which I greatly marvel. I like not the sound of it; it is a parlous thing to draw sword upon a king's officer; who knows, it might have been a deep affair of state.' And father and son discussed the matter at length.

When Sir Nigel had pointed out the extreme gravity of the case, Aubrey, after considering, said, 'Father, I see it all clearly now. I have unwittingly done a foolish thing, but I will not bring trouble upon this house. I have long had a wish to go forth and see something of the world, to play a man's part, and to fit myself for that which may be before me.'

'Whither would you go?'

'To London, to enter the king's service, and see a campaign. Ralph Tresham's father is going to get him into the Life Guards; perhaps he may do the same for me. Failing him, Lord Lovelace's favour may do something.'

'The idea is not to my liking,' said Sir Nigel. 'What did a soldier's life bring me but wounds, troubles, confiscations, and at last, ingratitude? An old man now, I see my estates in the hands of traitors, while I am neglected, as are many of my friends who served the royal cause as faithfully as did I,' he concluded bitterly.

'Tis no good to recall that, father.'

'But I must; 'tis that which prevents my sending you to Court as a grandson of old Sir Aubrey Berkeley should go. Your grandfather was accounted the wealthiest man in the county, and, zounds! I am now the poorest, and solely through my loyalty to the throne.'

'Then I will away to Holland and serve under William of Orange.'

'Nay, surely not, Aubrey. In the evening of our lives your mother and I would be loath to have you leave us altogether. If you must go, and forsooth, it may be better that you should, remain in England,

and when you have had your fill of camps and Courts, I pray God you may return to Blackwater in time enough to bury your mother and me.'

Aubrey having dressed, he and his father strolled out into the grounds. From the bowling-green in front of the house the spire of the old Abbey of St Albans could just be seen; to their right the grounds sloped away to a small ornamental lake surrounded by willow-trees. These, casting their shadows on the water, made it look quite black, to which circumstance the house owed its name of Blackwater. In front, a glorious panorama stretched. First the garden, in which the early morning sun was kissing the fresh May flowers, then a road hemmed in by stately trees, and beyond that the thick, dark-leaved trees in Pre Wood. Behind the house a high red-brick wall reared itself, and towards that the old knight seldom looked; it was the boundary that separated Blackwater from the grounds of Colonel Somervell, grounds that for generations had been in the possession of the Berkeleys. On the other side of that wall was the Manor House, with its magnificent collection of pictures and works of art (the plate had been melted years before to fill the coffers of Charles the First); and that house, with the best part of the estates, had been confiscated by Cromwell and given to Colonel Somervell, one of his own followers.

At the Restoration Sir Nigel had pleaded that he might be restored to his possessions, but his petition had been unsuccessful. Colonel Somervell had joined General Monk in recalling Charles, and for this reason, it was held, could not be dispossessed. Some years afterwards, however, he had fallen into bad repute, and his name had been mentioned in con-

junction with the Rye House Plot, but his family had still retained possession of the Manor House and its vast grounds. This fact rankled in Sir Nigel's mind, while he fostered a bitter contempt, not unmixed with a feeling of righteous indignation, against Somervell, whom he called a time-serving schemer.

Aubrey had been brought up to hold the family in abhorrence, and they had been as perfect strangers until one day, some years before, when Aubrey, being near to the Blackwater pond, heard a scream and a splash, and on looking round saw a kirtle float a moment on the water, then disappear. In an instant he had leapt from his pony, torn off his doublet, and jumped into the pond, which was very deep. The person who had fallen in rose to the surface, and Aubrey gripped at the long hair of a young girl. She had sufficient consciousness left to clutch Aubrey round the neck and almost to drown him, but after a struggle he managed to get her out.

They were both taken into the house, when it was found that the maiden Aubrey had rescued was old Somervell's daughter. When she came to her senses she explained how she had wandered from her father's grounds and had fallen into the pond through trying to reach a water-lily.

As Sir Nigel and Aubrey passed by the pond the recollection of the rescue flashed across Aubrey's mind. For the last three years it had been asserted that the Somervells were abroad; be that as it might, the only residents at the house were supposed to be an old caretaker and his wife.

Their walk over, Sir Nigel and Aubrey returned to the house, and over the breakfast-table the news of Aubrey's departure was communicated to his

mother, though the reason of it was withheld. She was, of course, much against it; but on Sir Nigel saying that it was necessary, she gave in to him, as she had done all her life.

The parting of Aubrey from his mother was somewhat affecting; then Sir Nigel placed a letter in his son's hand.

'It is to my old friend, Harry Compton, Bishop of London,' he said. 'He will, I know, for the sake of old times, when in many a skirmish he and I fought side by side, do what he can for you. And now, God speed thee, lad; remember all I have said, and do your duty to your God and to your king.'

Lady Berkeley's parting gift was a purse of gold, and then Aubrey mounted and trotted off with a gay wave of his hand, hastening lest he should show in his face the sorrow he felt in his heart.

Once clear of the grounds of Blackwater, he let his horse drop into a walk, and with head sunk down passed in review many incidents of his boyhood's days, then turned to take a farewell look at the house where the happiest moments of his life had been spent. Long and sadly he gazed, and a heavy feeling of coming trouble seemed to oppress him. At last, with a sudden tug, he wheeled round his horse and turned towards that capital in which so many fortunes were made, so many reputations established, and so many prizes gained; but where, alas! so many careers were blighted, so many lives wrecked, and so many tragic dooms encountered.

CHAPTER III

OF A RIOT IN LONDON.

AUBREY had a ride of over twenty miles before him; but the weather was fine and the road was good, so that the morning was still young when, from the heights beyond Ken Wood, he was able to look upon the great City of London lying below him. Making only a brief halt to eat a crust of bread and cheese at the Bull and Last Inn, he spurred on till he reached the village of Charing, and, passing along the Strand at a walking-pace, he rode into the City, his intention being to put up at one of the many small inns on the eastern side of the capital.

His progress was necessarily slow, for he found the narrow streets crowded with citizens, many of them apparently in their Sunday garments. Presently a company of pikemen marched by, the crowd making way for them. In Cheapside the press was so great that Aubrey decided to wait and observe what sort of procession was about to pass, for from the talk of those in the crowd it was clear that a procession of some sort was expected.

On the outskirts of the crowd, and just in front of Aubrey's horse, stood two tall men, one a great fellow in the garb of a smith, the other looking like a tanner.

'The Salamanca doctor should be here by now,' said the latter.

'Of a surety he should,' grinned the smith, 'but 'tis possible his friends do not wish to hurry him; they want to pay him all possible attention.'

At these words one of the bystanders laughed and made a remark to his companion. Turning to the smith for information, Aubrey asked, 'Can you tell me, good fellow, what procession it is that you wait for?'

The smith stared at Aubrey insolently a moment, then replied, 'Good fellow, indeed, and who may you be, forsooth, to "good fellow" me, and whence come you that you know not what's afoot to-day?'

'I did but ask a civil question,' replied Aubrey, 'and methinks it warranted a civil answer.'

'Use your eyes more and your tongue less,' said the tanner, 'and you will soon see for yourself.'

Aubrey felt much tempted to answer angrily; but at that instant a rolling of drums was heard, and the head of the procession appeared.

First of all came two files of mounted musketeers, making a brave show on their black jennets, the sun flashing on their polished helmets and corslets. After the musketeers came the drummers, and following them a party of pikemen with their sixteen-foot pikes borne on their shoulders. The first part of the procession was closed by some civic dignitaries, and then the rumbling of cart-wheels was heard. But above the rumbling of the wheels came a sound which caused Aubrey to look in curious expectancy. Howls and cries and the jeering shouts of the crowd fell upon his ears.

'Strike hard, man; beat lustily,' bawled a voice.

'One for Lord Russell,' yelled another, on which a volley of groans and imprecations broke from the crowd.

A loud cry of agony followed this, then more jeers, and as Aubrey leaned eagerly forward he saw a cart

drawn by a sturdy dray-horse coming along. At the cart-tail a man, naked to the waist, was fastened by his wrists, and behind him marched the common hangman, a brawny fellow, with bared arms; as the cart moved slowly forward he plied a six-thonged whip with such severity that every cut produced a howl of agony from the wretched man.

When the cart arrived opposite Aubrey, he noticed that the culprit was a stout man, with bandy legs, a short neck, and a repulsive-looking countenance. His cheeks were purple, his forehead low, and he had a tremendous length of chin which gave him the appearance of having his mouth in the middle of his face.

A block in the procession caused the cart to stop, and Aubrey gazed spellbound upon the sickening scene. The blood ran in little rivulets down the wretch's lacerated back, but the hangman plied his lash unmercifully.

The smith in front of Aubrey howled his delight at the spectacle.

'Lay on, lay on, friend,' he cried; 'strength to your arm! Tickle him, man; tickle him.'

The man bellowed as the blows fell upon him; and the tanner, stooping, picked up a stone, which, just as the cart moved on again, he hurled so truly that it caught the culprit on the forehead.

This deed roused Aubrey to fierce indignation.

'Brute!' he cried to the tanner, 'how dare you raise hand against that wretched being?' and with his riding-whip he administered a smart cut across the fellow's shoulders.

Fierce cries of resentment rose from the crowd.

'Ho! ho!' cried the smith, 'here is a friend of Titus Oates. He uses his whip on us;' and, cudgel in hand, he advanced threateningly upon Aubrey.

'Put up that stick, or I'll give you a taste of the whip,' said Aubrey to him.

'Hark, friends, he threatens us, the king's loyal subjects,' cried the smith; while the tanner growled, 'I'll make him pay for laying lash on me.'

In an instant an angry crowd was pushing round Aubrey; and ere he knew from which side to expect an attack a blow from a cudgel struck his left arm so heavily that he dropped his bridle. The sting of the blow increased his anger, and he laid about him with his whip.

Loud above the others, the smith's voice rang out, 'Shall we be beaten by an enemy of the king, some cut-throat a-horseback?'

The crowd pressed closer on Aubrey, several stones were flung, one of which caught him on the shoulder; then the tanner, who was on Aubrey's left, seized his baldrick, and with a great pull dragged him from the saddle. Before Aubrey could recover himself the crowd was upon him, and the man who had given him the blow with the club caught him by the arm, while the smith advanced in a threatening manner with his cudgel.

'Twas clearly no moment to stand upon false feelings of pride, and Aubrey cried out, 'How now! would you murder me in cold blood? Is this how you treat a stranger in the king's capital?'

'You began it, friend,' said one.

'And I doubt not you are a traitor,' added the smith.

'I am no traitor, but as good a subject of the king as any of you,' replied Aubrey.

'He cried shame on the punishment of Oates the perjurer, the murderer. Remember Russell and Sidney,' yelled a woman who was in the crowd. At these words the turbulent ones, with a howl, closed in; when Aubrey, tearing himself free from the man who held him, drew his sword, crying, 'If you will persist you shall taste steel. I will at least protect myself.'

'Down with the traitor!' cried the crowd.

'Help, help!' shouted Aubrey. 'Help against cut-throats!'

There was a sharp struggle for a moment, then some of the bystanders, to whom possibly the spectacle of Oates's punishment had been the reverse of pleasant, pressed forward to see what was afoot.

Foremost amongst these were two handsome, well-grown youths, richly though not showily dressed, and clearly of the better class.

Both wore swords, and, elbowing their way towards Aubrey, the foremost cried, 'Hallo, my masters, what's amiss? Brawlers assaulting a gentleman!'

'Look to yourself, meddler,' said one of the crowd, aiming a blow at him with a cudgel; but, quick as light, this was struck from the man's hand and a sounding box on his ear knocked him down. The two youths then forced their way to Aubrey's side, who, quite out of breath, was glad to pause for a moment; but the crowd, growing more angry, pressed on and soon quite a formidable fight was being waged, in which blows were freely given and taken, and blood flowed on both sides.

Aubrey had seized his horse by the bridle, and the

animal, terrified at the tumult, reared and plunged, dropping his iron-shod hoofs on many a toe.

In the midst of it all a mounted officer forced his way into the crowd, and in loud, authoritative tones bade the combatants stop.

'What means this, sirrahs?' he cried.

'So please you,' answered one of the youths who had come to Aubrey's assistance, 'these brawlers set upon this young gentleman and would have murdered him had we not interfered to save him.'

'We are no brawlers, but loyal subjects of King James,' cried the tanner, 'and yon gallant laid his whip about my shoulders out of wanton spite.'

The officer gave Aubrey a searching look, and for a moment seemed inclined to be disagreeable; but in another instant, without listening to any further explanations, he called to some pikemen, who very soon dispersed the crowd.

'Come, sir,' said one of the youths to Aubrey, 'it would be wiser to get out of this.'

'As you will. But whither?'

'Put up your sword and follow us.'

Doing as he was bid, Aubrey, leading his horse, followed the youths, who led the way down the street at the end of which the fight had taken place. They entered Basing Lane, the dome of St Paul's looming up before them. Here his guides paused; and one, looking at Aubrey, said, 'Good sir, we are well out of that squabble; the crowd is in a nasty mood to-day.'

'In truth it is, and if that is the temper of London citizens I care not how little I mix up with them'

'You are a stranger here, I take it?'

'I am, otherwise, perhaps, I had not got mixed up in this brawl; but you have saved me my liberty, perhaps my life. May I ask to whom I am indebted?'

'I am Benjamin Hewling, and this is my brother Will,' said the elder of the two.

'And my name is Aubrey Berkeley.' Upon which the three shook hands.

Then Benjamin Hewling asked, 'In which direction do you go, Mr Berkeley?'

'Truth to tell, I know not. I was looking for some quiet inn where I might put up for a day or two, when I got hemmed in by the crowd. I had no idea what was coming along, and out of curiosity I stayed to see. The horrible sight so disgusted me that I felt sick, and when that tanner, who began the attack on me, hurled a stone at the poor wretch at the cart's tail I cried shame on him, and gave him one with my whip. The rest you know.'

'These are indeed times when it is not safe to say what is in one's mind,' remarked William Hewling.

'You are probably right. However, at the present moment I am more concerned about where I shall find a lodging,' said Aubrey. 'Can you tell me of a good inn hereabouts?'

'If a lodging is all you want, why, come with me. My grandfather, Mr Kiffin, will be delighted to offer you hospitality.'

'Nay, friends,' exclaimed Aubrey. 'I cannot consent to inflict myself upon you, acquaintances of only a few minutes' standing. Your advice is all I ask, for you have the advantage of me in your knowledge of the town.'

But the brothers would hear of no refusal; and,

carrying Aubrey with them, they went on into St Paul's Churchyard, stopping before a large, fine-looking house.

'This is my grandfather's,' said Benjamin gaily. — 'Here, Peter, take this gentleman's horse round to the stables, and see to it that he is well cared for.'

Preceded by the brothers, Aubrey then entered the house, which was solidly and handsomely furnished. Crossing the hall, they ascended a flight of stairs to the dwelling-part of the building, the lower being used for business purposes.

They entered a large, lofty room, which looked out on St Paul's Churchyard. On hearing their footsteps, an old man who had been sitting at a table with a book before him rose to greet them.

'Grandfer,' said Benjamin, 'I have brought home a guest. Allow me to present Mr Berkeley.'

Aubrey bowed to the tall, stately-looking old gentleman. He was dressed entirely in black, and the deep lace on his sleeves and the gold buckles on his shoes bespoke the comfort of the well-to-do merchant, while his snow-white hair and wrinkled face testified to his advanced age.

'I am happy to welcome Mr Berkeley,' he said in pleasant tones. 'But his dress is disordered, and there is blood upon him; he has surely met with some accident?'

In a few words Benjamin Hewling related what had occurred.

'Can this be possible?' said Mr Kiffin with a deprecatory gesture.

'It is indeed,' said Aubrey. 'And had it not been for your two grandsons, to whom my warmest thanks are due, I fear I should not be here now.'

The old merchant, who had reseated himself, for an instant made no reply. His hands lay listlessly on the arms of his chair, and his head was bowed as if in thought. Presently he looked up.

'We have, indeed, fallen upon evil times, sir,' he said. 'The king seems little minded to study the wishes of his people; the benches are occupied by justices whose only law is the king's pleasure, and unmerciful punishments are inflicted upon prisoners from a spirit of revenge. This Titus Oates is a monster of iniquity, an inhuman wretch; he is guilty of perjury and murder, and the good Lord only knows what besides; but the horrible punishment inflicted upon him by the ferocious Jeffreys disgraces our courts.' *

'The sight we saw to-day was horrible enough in all conscience,' remarked Aubrey.

'Well, let us not think of unpleasant subjects,' said Will Hewling, whose lively features were an indication of a joyous disposition. 'Tis near dinner-time I fancy, for I am amazingly hungry, and here comes Hannah to call us to the meal.'

Aubrey glanced towards the door, and saw a young and handsome girl, who, with the handle of the door in her hand, stood, with a pretty blush upon her features, undecided whether to advance or retire.

'Come in, Hannah; come in,' cried Will heartily, stepping across the room and taking his sister round the waist. 'Here is a gentleman you must know,' and he led her to Aubrey.

Taking her hand, Aubrey uttered a few commonplace remarks, then Benjamin Hewling carried him off to his own room, where soap, water, and brushes made him once more respectable.

* Note A, 'Titus Oates,' page 316.

From time to time Benjamin had gazed with some degree of curiosity at the stout sword and the steel cuirass Aubrey wore, and presently he asked, 'Are you of the army, Mr Berkeley?'

'Not yet, but I hope to be,' answered Aubrey.

Nothing further was said on the subject, and, descending, they dined in the solid, substantial style of the City.

The afternoon passed very pleasantly, the brothers Hewling taking Aubrey out and showing him much of the ancient City. In the evening, Hannah, who was a good musician, played upon the clavichord, and she and her brothers sang glees and catches, till Mr Kiffin, pointing towards the timepiece, announced that it was time to go to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

OF AUBREY'S RECEPTION AT WHITEHALL.

AUBREY'S sleep was troubled with dreams, and his thoughts on waking were of the strange things which had befallen him. After having breakfasted he decided that he would, without delay, seek Bishop Compton and see what he could do to assist him in entering the king's service.

Having dressed himself in a suit of gray velvet, tagged with crimson, a collar of point-lace, and a new-fashioned, low-crowned beaver with a silver band, Aubrey set out for Aldersgate Street, where was the official residence of the Bishop of London. Arrived there, he found ecclesiastics of all degrees waiting to see the bishop on various matters, and it was some time before he could get an interview with the great man.

On entering his room, Aubrey saw the bishop seated at a table on which were scattered books and papers. Aubrey presented his letter, which the bishop held in his hand while he scanned the upright form and sturdy limbs of his visitor.

'Aubrey Berkeley, Aubrey Berkeley,' he mused. 'Are you of the family of my old friend and comrade, Sir Nigel Berkeley?'

'Sir Nigel is my father, my lord.'

'Say you so? Then welcome in the name of your father;' and the bishop, whose speech and carriage bespoke more the soldier than the priest, shook Aubrey heartily by the hand.

He then ran through the letter.

'Your father,' he said, 'recommends you to my notice, and asks me to push your fortune with his Majesty.'

'So I understood,' said Aubrey.

'Alas, I have but little interest with the king! You know, of course, that James views our church with small favour, so that request of mine is not very likely to be listened to.'

'My lord, you cannot do what is not in your power, and I shall thank you for the will as much as for the deed.'

'There speaks good sense and that I admire greatly; still, some little influence I may have, and I dare say a small appointment at Court may be found for you. How does that suit your inclination?'

'I should prefer a more active part if I may make bold to choose. I fear I am not fitted for a courtier.'

'But rather for a soldier, eh?'

'That suits more my present humour.'

'Oddsfish, as the late king used to say, just what your father was at your age, ay, and I too; and the bishop heaved a sigh, while his mind wandered back to bygone days.

'In an hour's time,' he said presently, 'I am attending the king's levee. If you are ready, I will carry you to Whitehall and see what can be done with his Majesty to further your interest.'

'My lord, I shall be ever grateful,' said Aubrey.

'Then wait for me in yon adjoining room and I will call you when I am ready.' Accordingly, in little more than the time specified, Aubrey found himself in the bishop's coach, driving westward.

Going by way of Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street, in the Strand they met a company of the King's Second

or Coldstream Regiment of Guards. Aubrey eyed the gay scarlet uniforms and glittering arms with delight. The bishop, himself an old Life Guardsman, smiled at Aubrey's enthusiasm.

'So your inclination lies towards the army?' he said.

'Yes,' replied Aubrey. 'If you can use your influence with his Majesty to obtain me a trooper's place in the Life Guards for a year or so I shall be contented.'

'I hear his Majesty favours the enlisting of none but those of his own religion in those regiments which are always about his person,' said the bishop, lowering his voice; 'the four shillings a day which the Life Guards receive attract many to their ranks. But I will see what I can do.'

They passed along the Strand with, on its south side, the lordly waterside houses of the nobility, the sites of which are now marked only by the names of the streets leading to the Embankment, as Northumberland Avenue, Essex Street, and so on, the only exception being Somerset House, which still stands on the site of the old palace built by the Protector Somerset. Turning from the Strand, and leaving the church of St Martin on their right, they soon arrived opposite the barracks which, erected for the accommodation of Charles the Second's Horse Guards, stood on the spot now known as the Horse Guards. A troop of cavalry, splendidly dressed and equipped, was drawn up in front of their quarters.

As they drove along, Aubrey saw at the other end of the Banqueting House the magnificent Holbein Gateway, built of black-and-white faced bricks, and flanked by four imposing towers.

They alighted and made their way to the stone gallery.

At the end stood a guard-house, outside which were several Life Guardsmen. The troopers were all fine-looking men, and were designated Gentlemen of the Guard, it being considered no dishonour for even the younger sons of the nobility to serve in their ranks.

Aubrey and the bishop reached the king's apartments, which indeed, in those days, there was no difficulty in entering. In fact, under Charles the Second the gates of the palace had stood always open, and few who could lay claim to the title of gentlemen, and had been properly introduced, had any difficulty in making their way to the royal presence, where they might see the king dine or sup, dance or play, or might even hear him tell one of those choice stories of his early adventures, for which he was so renowned.

In the early part of the reign of James the Second the same liberty was allowed, though the Court had lost much of its atmosphere of brightness and joviality, and was assuming that chilly air of suspicion for which it afterwards became notorious.

As Bishop Compton and Aubrey made their way through the magnificent galleries they passed groups of courtiers, state officials, soldiers, and diplomatists, amongst whom were some of the most celebrated men of the day. At last the ante-chamber was reached, and Aubrey and the bishop stood amongst the crowd waiting for an audience. Presently the curtains at the far end of the room were drawn aside, and as the two guards brought their halberds to the perpendicular a tall, rather slim man came out. He was most

elegantly dressed, and, walking with a mincing, dandified step, was crossing the ante-chamber, nodding to this and that one, when he espied Bishop Compton.

'Ah, my laard bishop,' he exclaimed, in the fashionable drawl of the day, 'are you waiting an audience of his Maajesty?'

'Yes, my lord,' replied the bishop with a bow.

'Ah, and your friend,' exclaimed the gentleman, staring at Aubrey through a quizzing-glass, 'a supplicant for some faavour, eh?'

'He is the son of Sir Nigel Berkeley of Blackwater, a staunch fighter for his Majesty Charles the First, and one of the late king's most ardent supporters.'

'Ah, I knew Sir Nigel slightly, a most estimable person. I am glad to knaaw a son of his,' said the fop graciously, 'though, truth to say, he comes to Court upon an unlucky day, 'pon my saaul!' and drawing from his waistcoat-pocket a small snuff-box, on the lid of which diamonds and rubies glittered, he delicately took a pinch. After dusting his frills and cravat with a handkerchief of Valenciennes lace, he assumed an apparently confidential manner with the bishop, and continued, 'The truth is, my laard, his Maajesty is in a decidedly bad mood. Still, if you want to see him, I will carry you in.'

'You would oblige me,' replied the bishop.

'Say no more, then; I am always at your service,' and he minced away, smiling to right and left.

'That is my lord of Sunderland,' whispered the bishop, 'the wealthiest, and some say the most dangerous and unscrupulous, man in England.'

Aubrey made no reply, for the atmosphere of the palace rather oppressed him; still, Lord Sunderland

presently returning, he accompanied the bishop into the audience chamber.

As the curtain fell behind him Aubrey found himself in a large, dark-oak wainscoted room, the hangings being of crimson. There were a good many people present, and Aubrey looked round him with a feeling of awe to think he was in the presence of the king.

As he entered he heard a rather harsh voice saying, 'No more, sir; speak no more of Oates. I will concede nothing. The rogue shall suffer the full penalty. He shall go through with it if he has breath in his body. I will make no concessions; my father made concessions, and he lost both crown and head.'

Looking in the direction whence came the voice, Aubrey saw the king seated in an armchair of dark oak, upholstered with crimson velvet.

James the Second was above the middle height, much fairer than his late brother Charles, who, indeed, had been very swarthy. James was not bad-looking, except that his mouth was rather large. He was dressed in black, his only ornament being the eight-pointed Star of the Garter, which he wore on his left breast.

Standing in front of him was one of the sheriffs of the City, who had presented a petition that Oates might be spared his second flogging. He, however, answered the king's vehement speech with many a deep obeisance as though expressing his absolute concurrence in the opinion expressed.

The courtiers who stood near the king, seeing that his Majesty was displeased with the sheriff, glared and frowned at him accordingly, and he withdrew abashed.

The bishop took Aubrey by the arm and guided him to a window recess where a gentleman was standing looking out across the water. As he turned, Aubrey recognised Lord Lovelace. The nobleman gave him a quick, sharp glance, but made no other sign of having seen him before, and, ignoring him, said to the bishop, 'Good-morning, my lord, we do not often have the pleasure of your company at the king's levee.'

'Those of my cloth are not always welcome,' whispered the bishop.

'You mean black robes are more in favour than lawn sleeves?' said Lovelace.

The bishop, with a smile, placed a finger upon his lips, then turned to speak to a Minister who had accosted him, when Lovelace stepped close to Aubrey.

'What brings you here?' he whispered fiercely.

'To pay my respects to his Majesty.'

'What are you asking for? Have you any influence?'

'I have not, but the Bishop of London is my friend.'

'Bah! do you think he is likely to further your business? Whatever influence he had died with Charles. And hark ye, young sir, have a care how you wag your tongue. There are those here who would spit you without compunction if your speech should outrun your discretion. Remember, I have your promise of secrecy.'

'What I have said I have said,' replied Aubrey stiffly, staring straight into Lord Lovelace's eyes, and already thinking that the intrigues of Court life would never suit him.

The bishop returning to him, they advanced and

stood among the crowd surrounding the king, when Aubrey, examining the features of those present, to his dismay saw the short man who, dressed in the king's uniform, had been one of those engaged in the attack upon Lady Wentworth's coach. This man, judging by the furtive and vindictive looks which he directed at Aubrey, had already recognised him. He was talking to an officer who stood near the king and was plainly on duty. This officer presently approached his Majesty and whispered a few words, on which an angry frown settled on James's face and he gave a short, sharp look in Aubrey's direction.

On this Aubrey's heart sank, for he knew he was indeed in a predicament.

'Who is that gentleman?' he asked in low tones of the bishop.

'The short one on the king's left? Oh, that's Harry Jermyn, of the Guards. He is just now high in his Majesty's favour.'

'I think it would be better not to press my business with the king now,' began Aubrey; when, James speaking, a dead silence fell upon the Court.

'We greet you, my Lord Bishop of London,' he said; 'it is not often we have the pleasure, though loyal churchmen are always welcome.'

The accent he put on the word 'loyal' escaped nobody, and Compton hastened to assure the king that he had no more loyal subject than himself.

James waved one shapely hand.

'Of that we are well assured,' he said, 'and the time may soon arrive when we shall put your loyalty to the test, when we hope that you will not fail us.' In the latter part of the speech there was discernible a rather harsh ring.

The bishop expressed his readiness always to obey the king, when James continued, 'To what lucky chance are we indebted for this visit? Is there anything in which we can pleasure you?'

'Your Majesty overwhelms me,' replied the bishop; 'but if I am allowed to make a request, I would recommend to your royal notice Master Aubrey Berkeley, son of Sir Nigel Berkeley, an old and valued servant of your royal father.'

At the name of Berkeley the king stared hard at Aubrey, who, according to the bishop's instructions, advanced and knelt before his sovereign.

James did not give him his hand, but exclaimed in harsh tones, 'Stand up, young man, your name hath already been spoken to us.'

Aubrey did he was bidden, and saw on James's face the frown that his subjects, during his short reign, so often saw there, and so often had cause to rue.

'Sir Nigel Berkeley,' sneered the king, 'who is he? Some beggarly cavalier who importuned our late brother till he got a knighthood for services which he had never rendered?'

'My father will die a poorer man than he was born, sire,' said Aubrey hotly, stung to the quick by the king's remark. 'A Roundhead knave was rewarded by Cromwell with the best part of my father's estates, which the late king never restored again, though my father beggared himself in your father's service.'

'Speak not of "Roundhead knaves,"' said the king. 'All are now our good subjects. Mayhap this Sir Nigel is the descendant of one of those knights our grandfather dubbed,' alluding to James

the First's mania for making knights, he having created three hundred on his journey to the capital to assume the crown.

'No, sire, the Berkeley baronetcy goes back to the second Edward.'

'To whom, I hope, they were more loyal than their descendants seem to be to me,' said James crossly. 'But tell me, young man, is it true what I hear about your doings but yesterday. Did you lay your whip on loyal citizens? This is a nice state of things, when my subjects openly sympathise with malefactors, tried and condemned before a jury drawn from their own class. Know this, that I will have my laws respected, and that I will have toleration for all classes and for all people, let their religion be what it may. To say or do aught against that is treason—I say treason,' and the king looked angrily round.

The courtiers glanced at one another, and James, speaking to the Bishop of London, continued, 'And for you, my lord bishop, to interest yourself on behalf of this young man—fie, I had not thought it of you.'

'I knew nothing of this,' said the bishop.

'But I kne.v,' cried James, 'and all here shall know that I will have toleration, and that the laws shall be obeyed.'

Jermyn, who had evidently enjoyed the scene just enacted, now pushed forward and endeavoured to get a word with James, which, had he succeeded in doing, nothing could have prevented Aubrey's immediate arrest. But the king was in a very bad humour, and he impatiently waved Jermyn aside.

'Peace, man,' he cried, 'you are ever ready to run

in with your weak knees where a stronger man would hesitate to tread.'

This allusion to Jermyn's thin legs and wobbly knees caused the courtiers to snigger loudly, and the infuriated Jermyn, giving Aubrey a look that would have slain him if looks could, slunk back behind the king's chair, where he remained biting his fingers in impotent rage.

Aubrey had stood dumfounded at the reception he had met with, and only wondered how he could get out of his present uncomfortable position. He looked at Sunderland, who stood near him; but that statesman deliberately turned his back upon him and took snuff, which action was in itself sufficient to have destroyed any chance Aubrey ever had of Court preference.

'I had intended to crave permission to serve in your regiment of Life Guards, your Majesty,' stammered Aubrey, not knowing what to say.

But the king turned away, saying coldly, 'None serve in my Guards but loyal gentlemen;' and he entered into conversation with that same officer who must have told the king that Aubrey had been mixed up with the riot.

Aubrey's predicament was put an end to by Lord Lovelace, who, with that headstrong impetuosity which was his great characteristic, stepped forward, and, taking the young man's arm, said to him kindly, 'Friend, your audience is at an end;' and, bowing deeply, Aubrey retired till he and the bishop were again among the crowd.

One or two looked at them superciliously through those glasses on long handles then coming into fashion, and known as quizzing-glasses; but the

majority took no notice of them, when the bishop, seizing his opportunity, left the audience chamber and made his way to his coach.

He was clearly in a bad temper, and Aubrey said nothing. When they were again in the coach, and Whitehall was left behind, Compton said, 'Twas ill-advised of you, Master Berkeley, not to take me entirely into your confidence.'

'I humbly crave your pardon,' said Aubrey, 'but I never thought the adventures I have met with during the last few days could affect me here. I was also bound down to secrecy; but some things I can tell you,' and he related his City adventure.

'The officer who rescued the Hewlings and me from the crowd was he who whispered to the king,' concluded Aubrey.

'A man who is hand and glove with Sunderland,' said the bishop.

'I have also run up against and frustrated, in what I thought was a rascally attempt at robbery or abduction, Harry Jermyn, at the same time having the misfortune to run through the body a friend of his, one Dick Talbot.'

The bishop stared in open-eyed astonishment. 'Made enemies of Jermyn and Talbot!' he cried, 'two of the most unprincipled rogues at Court! Believe me, you will do little good in London. Why, your life is not safe an hour. Talbot is the man who does all the dirty work about the Court, and Jermyn is well in with the king. Besides that, he is one of the vainest coxcombs of the day, and you have caused him to be laughed at. Have a care where you go after dark, and if you value your life or liberty, and

will be advised by one who wishes you well for your father's sake, you will leave London behind you before nightfall.'

Aubrey looked despondently from the coach window. 'Your advice is reasonable,' he said, 'though in truth I know not whither to go. Return home I cannot, for I left there to save my people from the consequences of my act against Jermyn.'

'Where are you staying now?'

'With one Kiffin, in the City.'

'Bad, bad! Kiffin is well known to be disaffected towards the king. He spoke in the City against Oates's punishment, and were he not an influential man he would ere now have felt the king's anger. You had better leave Kiffin's at once, and go to the "Saracen's Head," between Charing and Westminster, where I know you will be safe for a time. There I will send you word in the morning what you had best do.'

Having arrived at the bishop's house in Aldersgate Street, Aubrey bade him good-bye, and went off on foot to Kiffin's house.

He found the brothers Hewling both in, but busy packing their trunks as though for a journey. They greeted Aubrey warmly, and asked him how he had fared at Court.

'To tell the truth, but badly,' said Aubrey. 'London is no place for me. I am off.'

'Whither?'

'That I cannot say.'

'Why not come west with us? We are going into Somersetshire to an aunt's, and can assure you a warm welcome.'

'Nay, I know not what my movements will be. I

sleep to-night at the "Saracen's Head," and to-morrow I leave London; but whether I go north, south, east, or west I cannot say.'

Having bidden Mr Kiffin farewell, Aubrey then took leave of the Hewlings and set off for the 'Saracen's Head.' Arrived there, he ordered dinner, after which he walked into the City to see what he could of the town before he turned his back on it, perhaps for ever.

As he strolled along he once or twice caught sight of an ill-looking fellow, having a black patch over one eye, who seemed to be following him. This man, when Aubrey stopped suddenly, halted and looked about him, and then turned away and disappeared, but always came back again when Aubrey went on.

Seeing this, Aubrey walked towards the man, who turned into Whitefriars, which they were then passing, and was lost to sight among the squalid houses, where Aubrey, who had already been warned against venturing into that den of thieves and cut-throats, did not think it wise to follow.

The circumstance, however, put him somewhat on his guard, and he not only kept a sharp eye about him, but returned to his inn earlier than he otherwise would.

Having eaten his supper, he strolled to the window, from which a good view, extending to the river, could be obtained. As he was looking out he saw a man, whose hat was well pulled down over his eyes, pass in front of the inn and give a look up at the windows.

The fellow had on a short, fashionable cloak, beneath which a long sword stuck out, and Aubrey

would not have recognised him had he not caught sight of the black patch over his eye.

'Zounds!' he muttered, 'this fellow is certainly watching me,' and catching up his sword he ran downstairs and through the bar. His man was then walking rapidly westward, and had already got some distance away. By running, Aubrey overtook him and said, 'You seem to take a great interest in my proceedings; if there is anything you want to know speak out, and you shall have an answer.'

The man pulled his hat down lower over his eyes, and, with a scowl, laid his hand on the hilt of his sword. 'I know you not,' he growled; 'but if you use language unbecoming one gentleman to another I will give you a lesson in manners.'

'Gentleman!' laughed Aubrey ironically, staring at the other's tawdry finery, 'cut-purse would be a truer name for you, methinks.'

'Sink me, you shall answer for that!' cried he of the black patch, half-drawing his sword.

'Now, this moment,' replied Aubrey, also half-drawing, when the man, after throwing a quick glance around him, and seeing no one, muttered under his moustache, 'Bah! I do but waste time with a beardless boy. I have spitted bantams like you three at a time before breakfast.' And so saying, he walked quickly on.

Aubrey could do nothing more, so returned to the inn, wondering whither all this mystery would lead him.

He asked his host whether he had noticed or knew the man with the black patch; but the landlord replied that he neither knew him, nor had, in fact, seen him.

Aubrey sought his bed early, but first, as a precaution, locked and bolted his door. He could not have been long asleep when he awoke with a start, fancying guns were being fired close to his ears. He sat up, and then became aware that some one was hammering loudly on his door. Jumping out of bed, he seized his sword, and cried out, 'Hallo there, who knocks?'

'Is that you, Aubrey Berkeley?'

'Yes.'

'Then open, as you value your life.'

'Who are you?'

'Open, fool; delay is dangerous.'

'Say first who you are?'

'Come close then,' cried a voice without, impatiently, as another bang, apparently from a sword-hilt, made the door rattle.

Aubrey obeyed, and the man outside stooped to the keyhole.

'Who are you?' again asked Aubrey.

'John Lovelace,' was whispered in reply. 'Now open, for a file of musketeers are on their way to arrest you on a charge of high treason.'

CHAPTER V.

OF THE ADVENTURE AT THE 'SARACEN'S HEAD.'

ON hearing these words, Aubrey undid the door, when—booted, spurred and cloaked, red in the face and perspiring—Lord Lovelace burst in.

'Zounds, you're abed early, a thorough country-man,' he snapped. 'Quick, on with your clothes!'

'For what reason?'

'Well, man, you heard what I said. Are you pining to see the inside of a prison and to end your days on a gibbet?'

'By no means. But this is surely England; no man need fear the law who hasn't broken it, and what have I done?'

Lovelace uttered an angry exclamation. 'This prattle about law makes me fume,' he said. 'James is the law, therefore what he does can be no other than lawful. He would sooner part with his life than with that doctrine. You have offended him, touched him on his most vulnerable point, have stirred up sedition amongst well-disposed subjects. Sunderland has turned his back on you, and that rat Jermyn has blown upon you for preventing him and Dick Talbot from carrying off my cousin to the Tower, and now you ask, "What have I done?" I tell you many a better man has lost his head for less!'

'How know you this about Jermyn?'

'Because, not an hour ago, I was standing behind a curtain near a table at which the king was playing

basset, when Sunderland came and told him. Jermyn has been in disgrace all day ; but he told Sunderland about you, and Sunderland hurried to the king with the news. I at once went to Compton, learnt where you were to be found, and came on here. Jermyn, I know, is on his way here with a file of musketeers to arrest you. He put a fellow on to dog your steps this morning, and knows where you are.'

'The man with the black patch !' said Aubrey, who all this while had been dressing. Suddenly he paused. 'My thanks are due to you for your good services,' he said ; 'but I have a great mind to wait to be arrested, and brave this out. The king will not break the laws of the country.'

'Fool,' said Lovelace angrily ; 'James, to accomplish his own ends, will break anything ; once he determines on a course nothing will ever turn him from it. He never forgets or forgives an injury.'

Aubrey thought for a moment, then said, 'Why do you take all this trouble to save one who is nothing to you ?'

Lord Lovelace laughed. 'Because, my ingenuous youth, you know more than is good for me and certain of my friends, and not enough to satisfy James, who already has suspicions. Once in his power, the rack, the iron boot, the thumbkins, would all be tried upon you, and under their persuasion you might mention names or invent occurrences. No, Master Berkeley, I will save you if I can, for you have rendered our cause good service ; but rather than you should fall alive into James's hands I will pass this blade through your heart,' and he tapped the hilt of his rapier.

'But whither am I to go ?'

'I will see to that; quick, saddle your horse, I have mine below. In an hour we will be in safety. As you have ruined yourself with James, you had best join us; but if you won't, you must at least lie quiet until'—— and he paused.

'Until what?' asked Aubrey.

Lovelace had been looking from the window along the road towards Whitehall, which showed white in the moonlight.

'Thousand furies!' he cried, 'you have delayed too long. Look!'

Aubrey did so, and some distance away saw a body of men advancing with measured step, the polished barrels of their muskets glinting in the moonlight, the lighted matches glaring red. This sight brought vividly home the truth of Lord Lovelace's remarks. That the king was exceedingly incensed with him he had good cause to know, therefore in an instant he made up his mind on a matter that was in reality the turning-point in his career. He would accompany Lord Lovelace!

Having so decided, with feverish haste he finished his dressing, and began putting together his few belongings.

'I left my horse tied to a tree just below the inn,' said Lord Lovelace; 'while you are getting ready, and for heaven's sake be quick, I will saddle your nag and lead it from the stable. We have no time to lose.'

'My horse is a bay mare, the only one in the stable,' said Aubrey; 'you cannot mistake it.'

In less than a couple of minutes Aubrey saw Lovelace lead the bay from the inn yard. He then darted downstairs.

Hardly had he reached the bar, however, when the musketeers, perhaps having caught sight of Lovelace leading away Aubrey's horse, reached the inn, deployed, and blew up their matches in readiness to fire.

Two soldiers entered the bar, and one, Aubrey saw, was the odious Jermyn, the other, a burly sergeant. In his high voice Jermyn cried, 'We are on the king's errand, let no man move on peril of his life. There are traitors within.'

While those in the bar looked at one another with frightened faces, Aubrey, seeing all escape by the front of the inn was cut off, threw a guinea in payment of his bill towards the landlord, then darted back up the stairs. Not, however, before he had been caught sight of by Jermyn, who cried out, 'There is our prisoner! After him, Turnbull, while I call our men in to search the house.'

The sergeant started after Aubrey, who, however, made the most of his few moments' start. Ascending the stairs three at a time, he reached the top, raced down a passage leading to the back of the inn, and dashed into a bedroom, the door of which he locked behind him. Running to the window, he threw it open and looked out; the garden of the inn was beneath him, and without a moment's thought he threw out his valise, then lowered himself by the window sill till he hung by his hands, and dropped, falling upon his feet on soft earth outside a lower window just as Jermyn entered that room by the door. With an angry cry the officer whipped out his rapier and dashed the point through the window in the hope of reaching Aubrey, but he only succeeded in breaking the glass.

Aubrey ran across the garden, but found it was surrounded by a high wall. He paused for a moment nonplussed, while loud and angry shouts sounded behind him. At that instant he caught sight of a sturdy vine trained against and nailed to the wall. Throwing over his valise, with hands and feet he swarmed up, succeeded in reaching the top, and dropped over into the road on the other side. He then picked up his valise and raced at top speed in the direction Lovelace had taken, when just at the end of the wall he ran full tilt against a burly musketeer, who gripped him firmly in his arms.

He tried in vain to free himself or to get at the hilt of his sword; the soldier had both his arms round him and held him in an iron embrace, bawling the while, 'Ho there, Joyce, Pringle, to me. I have the traitor.'

Aubrey was in despair, thinking that after all he should be captured, when from the darkness a mounted figure appeared, an arm was raised, and a pistol-butt fell with a crash on the musketeer's head, felling him.

'Seize my stirrup-leather,' fiercely whispered Lovelace, for he it was; 'if I am recognised all is lost.'

Aubrey did as he was bidden, and they went at a gallop for thirty yards; then they reached Aubrey's horse, which Lovelace helped him to mount.

'Now the spur,' he said grimly, just as a dozen musketeers, attracted by their comrade's cries, dashed from the inn. There was a spluttering discharge, and several balls whistled past the fugitives, but all wide of their mark.

'It is a good thing Jermyn brought foot-soldiers



A pistol-butt fell with a crash on the musketeer's head.

C. F.

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and not troopers,' said Lovelace; 'when these musketeers are tired of wasting powder they can march back to Whitehall.'

Before the soldiers could discharge a second volley the riders were out of sight; and the horses settling down into a steady stride, they galloped along Citywards. Turning, however, to their left, they crossed Moorfields and headed north.

Lord Lovelace did not hesitate a moment as to the road; he seemed well acquainted with it, and they kept up their speed mile after mile. It was a lovely night, and Aubrey enjoyed the wild ride through what was then, and is in some parts even now, a lovely country.

Very little was said, though each was possibly busy with his thoughts, Aubrey's not being very pleasant ones. Ever since his parting with Ralph Tresham a tide of unavoidable circumstances had swept him along; his long anticipated visit to London, where he had been going to win preferment, had lasted just two days, during which time he had not only seen quite enough of that great city, but had left it flying for his life, branded as a traitor, and, though in his heart quite loyal, thrown into the company of a man of whose loyalty he could not but entertain strong suspicions, yet to whom he was in great measure beholden. Circumstances, however, were opposed to Aubrey's leaving his companion just then, and he galloped along by Lord Lovelace's side till both he and his horse showed considerable signs of fatigue.

With the exception of one or two brief halts, they did not draw rein till they had reached a large house, at the gate of which Lovelace rang loudly.

The noise aroused Aubrey, who, half-asleep, had taken little notice of the latter part of the road they had followed.

The gate being opened, they entered, Lord Lovelace whispering something to the porter, who, after shutting and barring the gate, took their horses to the stables.

Lord Lovelace led the way inside the house, and, lighting a candle in a silver candlestick, conducted his companion to a parlour where there was both food and drink upon the sideboard. He filled a large glass with wine, which he offered to Aubrey, then, draining off one himself, he asked his companion if he were hungry.

On receiving a reply in the negative, he broke off a small piece of bread, then taking up the candlestick, he conducted him to a large, handsomely furnished double-bedded room.

'Now, friend Berkeley,' said Lovelace in hearty tones as he munched his bread, 'jump between the sheets and get a good sleep, for it is beyond my powers of prophecy to foretell what may happen to-morrow.'

CHAPTER VI.

HOW AUBREY WENT DOWN INTO THE WEST.

WHEN Aubrey awoke it was well on towards noon. He sat up in the bed, looked around him; the other bed was empty. Lord Lovelace having already risen.

Jumping up Aubrey went to the window, which he threw wide open. The morning was a fine one; the sun poured down from a cloudless sky, the scent of new-mown hay, overshadowed by that of the lovely garden beneath him, the fresh air, blithesome birds warbled joyfully, the gentle buzz of insects lulled the senses.

The picture upon which Aubrey looked was a charming one. Beyond the well-kept garden was a fine belt of grassy oaks and beeches. Away to his right lay rolling fields, in one of which several men were engaged in haymaking. Beyond them again rose in the spire of a church and the red tiles of some neighbours' houses, while the distant reflection of water, either lake or river, shone like molten silver. To the left was the approach to the house, with a grand gateway at the end of it, and beyond his

Turning to the window, Aubrey enjoyed a good splash in the large marble basin, then dressed himself with care and descended the stairs. Without meeting a soul, he found his way to the room that he and Lovelace had been in on the previous night, and

seated himself in the window recess which looked out into the garden.

He had not been there long before voices from without fell upon his ear, and he had no difficulty in at once recognising one speaker as Lord Lovelace, whose first words betrayed the identity of the other.

'My dear Henrietta,' he was saying, 'there is no necessity to tell him anything, neither dare I, unless he swears to throw in his lot with us.'

'I like not leading any one blindly into our cause, and this young man hath already rendered me good service. I have a regard for him, and would not requite his kindness in a way he might not like,' said the lady.

'Tush, Henrietta, you are over-squeamish; methinks the service I rendered him last night repaid anything he ever did for you. Were it not for me he would now be cooling his heels in Newgate.'

'Still, we want none but willing adherents; our cause is a righteous one.'

'And therefore every loyal man and true patriot should join us. If anything should go wrong he will know nothing, and if all goes well I dare say a baronetcy and a regiment of horse will repay him. This money must go by a trusty hand, and none but a gentleman should be sent to the duke. Young Berkeley is a lad of spirit, and is just fitted for the task. For myself, I must go back to London, and keep an eye on Wildman, whom I don't altogether trust.'

The speakers, who had paused for a moment in their stroll, then went on again, and Aubrey heard no more. What he had heard, however, was enough to set him thinking seriously. This business, what-

ever it was, did not seem to bode much good to the king, or else why so much secrecy. A baronetcy and a regiment of horse though, that was a dazzling bait; but no, whatever the reward might be, Aubrey would be true to the king. Who, too, was this 'duke' they spoke of? Aubrey was still revolving these things in his mind when Lady Henrietta and Lord Lovelace entered the room. Both seemed surprised at seeing him, but nothing could surpass the warmth of their welcome. Lady Henrietta insisted on at once carrying him off to the dining-room, where the dinner was then served.

The shades of evening were falling when Lovelace, slipping his arm within Aubrey's, led him into the garden.

'Friend Berkeley,' he said, 'from what passed at Whitehall I gather that you are anxious to make your own way in the world.'

'In truth I am.'

'You will hardly do much good at Court, I fancy,' said Lovelace dryly. 'You have made yourself there more enemies than friends, and you are as good as exiled.'

'Alas, 'twould seem so! Methinks I shall have to seek abroad for that employment I cannot find here.'

Lovelace looked steadily at him. 'There is employment,' he said, 'ay, and preferment too, for every Englishman of spirit, in his own country, if he will but accept it.'

'What mean you?'

'That if you will serve me I can assure you both.'

'What employment do you speak of?'

'That which any gentleman in the land might accept without shame.'

'I have heard and seen so many things lately that rather puzzle me, my lord,' said Aubrey bluntly, 'that I must be plain. What is this business you speak of?'

'I cannot tell you unless you pledge me your word to join us.'

'That will I never do unless I am convinced that there is nothing in it of treason against the king.'

Lovelace stamped angrily. 'Tush, man, why always this talk of treason? I should have thought you felt more gratitude to me. Suppose, now, you had to make choice between your religion and your king, which would you choose?'

Aubrey stared at the speaker, aghast at the suggestion. Such a question had never occurred to him. For a moment he hesitated, then replied, 'When such an event happens it will be time enough to decide.'

Lovelace turned angrily from him. 'Well,' he said, 'you must please yourself; but under the circumstances you will, of course, understand that you cannot remain here. You might both hear and see things which it would be better for you to know nothing of.'

'I am ready to depart at once, and, believe me, I shall ever remember with gratitude the service you have rendered me.'

Lovelace stood for a moment toying with the knot of his rapier, then he said, 'I know not where to advise you to go, for, in all sincerity, you had better keep out of James's way. I return at once

to London, whither, of course, I cannot take you, though I should be sorry for any harm to happen to you. There is a way, however, in which you can oblige me and put yourself in safety at the same time, if you like.'

'I shall be happy to do anything for you, with the one exception I have mentioned.'

'Oh you need not be afraid of treason,' laughed Lovelace. 'The truth is, I want a considerable sum of money conveyed into Somersetshire. I have no one to whom I can trust it at the moment, and time presses. Will you ride west for me and put up at the Angel Inn, near Bruton, till I send on another messenger to relieve you of your charge?'

'I am to know nothing of the matter?'

'Nothing at all.'

'And how shall I know your messenger?'

'He will have a letter sealed with the crest of my cousin.'

'I will do as you wish.'

'Good! Then you must remain here till to-morrow night, when the bags will be given to you. Ride at your ease, as you will do well not to attract attention. At the "Angel" you will be perfectly safe, for the landlord is a man I can trust implicitly, and if you say you are a friend of mine he will be ready to serve you in every way. From Bruton, your commission being executed, if you still wish to leave the country you can journey on to Bristol, whence you can ship to any part that takes your fancy.'

This being arranged, Lord Lovelace departed, and soon afterwards Aubrey went to bed.

The next day he passed very pleasantly, and in

the evening a messenger arrived; after he had departed a couple of heavy leather bags were given to Aubrey by Lady Henrietta.

'These are what my Cousin Lovelace spoke to you about,' she said. 'He told me you understood what to do with them.'

'I know exactly, my lady.'

'Then will you take charge of them, and keep them in your room till you start, which, of course, will not be until the morning?'

Aubrey had nothing to say against this, and next morning, when his horse was saddled, and the bags safely bestowed in his holsters, Lady Henrietta walked out to him, and, pressing a ring into his hand, said, 'I wish you had been entirely in our confidence, for I hold you to be a true and loyal gentleman. Still, every man must act according to his convictions. Should the venture upon which we are engaged turn out well, it shall be my particular pleasure to see to your advancement in return for the services you have rendered me. Should things turn out amiss, which God, who is surely on our side, forbend, keep the ring in memory of a lost cause.'

Aubrey placed the ring upon his finger, then, kissing the lady's hand, he mounted and rode away.

His first day's journey was without adventure. Next morning, proceeding on his way, he presently overtook two gentlemen. Not caring to enter into conversation with any one he might meet on the highroad, he would have passed them, but the foremost rider, staring at him, cried out in pleased tones, 'Why, 'tis Master Berkeley, as I live! Well met, friend,' and he held out his hand.

The speaker was William Hewling, and, looking at the other rider, Aubrey recognised Benjamin Hewling.

He greeted them cordially, and they rode on together. William Hewling, the younger and gayer of the two brothers, chatted carelessly away, and asked Aubrey what his business was, and whither he was travelling.

Having had several unpleasant experiences recently, Aubrey felt chary of saying too much to an acquaintance of such short standing, although he had taken a very great liking to William Hewling.

'Truth is,' he answered, 'that riot which I got mixed up with in London turned out very much to my disadvantage. My chance of Court favour is gone, and I am thinking of going abroad.'

'Where every loyal and devout Englishman will soon be driven,' said William Hewling impetuously. 'I, for one, will never bow head to a king who permits such atrocities as the punishment of Oates. My sword is for freedom and the religion of my fathers, and down with all pensioners and lickspittles of the French king, say I.'

'Will, Will,' cried Benjamin, 'for goodness' sake have a care! Such words would cost you your life were they but repeated,' and he looked suspiciously at Aubrey.

'Tush, brother, Master Berkeley is a gentleman and an honest man I'll wager. Though he may not think as I do, yet he would not betray me.'

'That would I not,' said Aubrey, 'though, as your brother says, 'tis never wise to talk too loudly.'

'And Will does not mean half he says,' said Benjamin, peeping slyly at Aubrey.

'I know not so much about that,' laughed Will. 'If I were to tell what is our business in the west some people would think I meant more than I said.'

'Hist, lad,' said Benjamin angrily, 'are you mad?' But Will only laughed, and, touching his horse with the spur, galloped madly some few hundred yards along the road and then rode back to them, out of sheer exuberance of spirits.

They journeyed for some distance together, Will Hewling keeping all the party alive with his buoyant spirits, but Benjamin was clearly on thorns. The younger brother seemed rather to enjoy teasing Benjamin, for he talked wildly at times, and suddenly said to Aubrey, 'Master Berkeley, tell me seriously, are you for Church or King?'

'In truth I know not what you mean,' replied Aubrey.

'Will, Will,' said Benjamin, 'be quiet. Your tongue will ruin us.'

'And there is no choice to be made,' said Aubrey, with a smile. 'Come, I will make a compact with you. While we travel together let us not talk of state matters or pry into one another's business. I confess I am not free to tell you mine, and I wish not to inquire about yours.'

'Spoken like a true gentleman,' said Benjamin, raising his hat. 'Master Berkeley, under these circumstances I shall be delighted with your company, and if my madcap brother Will offends us in any way, why, we'll—we'll'——

'Roll him in the ditch,' laughed Aubrey. And from that time for three days they rode on together, thoroughly enjoying the journey and each other's company.

At Frome they parted more like old friends than casual acquaintances. The Hewlings were going to Harptree, in the Mendips, where Aubrey promised, should he ever be in their vicinity, to call upon them, though he made no secret of his intention of going abroad.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW AUBREY CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE DUKE.

LATE that night Aubrey reached the Angel Inn, where the landlord, on learning that he was a friend of Lord Lovelace, made much of him. The weather, which had been fine, changed suddenly, and a heavy thunderstorm broke over the country. The rain poured down, turning the roads into quagmires and the ditches into brawling rivulets, and this rain continued on and off for several days, during which Aubrey stayed at the inn, hearing or seeing nothing of Lord Lovelace's messenger. After the weather had cleared somewhat, he would occasionally mount his horse and take an hour's gallop, leaving word always that any messenger who should arrive for him should wait until he returned.

One afternoon, after he had been absent a little longer than usual, the host came bustling out to meet him on his return.

'A messenger hath been here for you, Measter Berkeley,' he cried.

'When? Where is he?' asked Aubrey eagerly.

'A be goane, 'a wouldn't stay,' replied the host.

'Gone!' said Aubrey aghast. 'Zounds, man, I told you to keep him. The Lord only knows what harm you may have done in letting him go.'

'Hoity-toity, measter, 'tis easy to zay keep un, and zo I 'u'd ha' done; but 'twasn't a he, 'twas a she—ha, ha!'

'What?'

'Ay, and as vitty a maid as ever I zeed. She axes vor you and zays, "Give un this," then offz and away loike the wind.'

The landlord handed Aubrey a letter, which the latter took mechanically.

'A handsome lady, you say,' he said, thinking it might have been the Lady Henrietta; 'was she about five-and-twenty, tall and dark, with large brown eyes?'

'Lard, no, zur; younger, and vair, and gray eyes, and, lor', zo plump as a partridge.'

Aubrey gave up in despair; he knew no such lady as his rubicund host described. He looked at the letter. Ah, that would throw some light on the matter! He turned it over, saw that it bore the seal of Lady Wentworth, and smiled to himself.

Of course the messenger must have been she. The host was so flustered, he had mixed up things, probably being awakened from his afternoon nap after, perhaps, a heavier potation than usual.

Aubrey broke the seal, and going inside the house read:

'DEAR MR BERKELEY,—My Cousin L. writes me that he is unable to send the messenger to Bru'on as he intended. He begs you so far to favour him as to ride on to the "King's Head," at Crewkerne, where a man wearing a black breast-piece and a helmet with cheek-guards will meet you. Hand over to him that which you carry. I send this by the hand of one who, for many reasons, could not carry out that which we ask you to do.—Always your true friend,

H. W.'

Having re-read this letter, Aubrey could learn

no more than just what it told him. The landlord adhered to his description of the lady who had brought the letter, so at last Aubrey gave the matter up in despair.

It was too late to start for Crewkerne that night, so he retired early, rose with the lark, and after bidding his host adieu, in high spirits started off, glad that he would soon see the end of a business that did not at all commend itself to him.

He rode hard that day, but his route lying in great part across country, and the roads being in some places almost impassable on account of the heavy rains, his progress was necessarily slow.

It was long after noon when he passed through Ilminster, where, at the cross roads, he paused for a few minutes, wondering which would be his nearest way. Eventually taking the right-hand road, he was spurring along as fast as his tired horse would go, when just at the junction of the road he was following with the main road from Taunton he came suddenly upon a troop of horse. The men looked like yeomen and farmers, and were tolerably well mounted and armed, though in the latter respect there was a great diversity among them. Some wore iron helmets with cheek-pieces, such as Cromwell's men had worn, others had corslets; all carried swords, but of patterns varying from light basket-hilted rapiers to heavy double-edged broadswords of the beginning of the century.

The whole troop were laughing and shouting, and seemed ripe for molesting any one they might meet. Their leader, a man dressed in foreign fashion, who rode in front, cast a sharp, inquiring look at Aubrey, who, remembering what he carried, and not wishing

to enter into a dispute with so warlike a body of men, turned sharp off to his left and rode down a grassy lane.

Several of the riders, however, called out to him, and their leader came spurring towards the lane, in loud and insolent tones bidding Aubrey stop. This, however, he was by no means inclined to do, and he went on at top speed, when some half-dozen men, following their leader, gave chase. Their horses were fresher than Aubrey's, and they gained rapidly upon him. Moreover, the lane turned out to be but a blind turning, having at the end a five-barred gate opening into a field.

Seeing himself thus trapped, Aubrey turned at bay, drawing his sword, when a great fellow who looked like a farmer, giving a hunting cry of 'Whoop there, wind him!' came rushing at him.

'Who are you who molest the king's subjects on his highways?' demanded Aubrey haughtily.

'Which king?' replied the fellow, at which some of his companions laughed loudly.

'Let me pass,' said Aubrey, advancing towards the men, sword in hand.

'Hold!' cried the leader of the band. 'You pass not till you have given an account of yourself. Whither are you going?'

'By what right do you question me?'

'By the right of might,' replied the man savagely, 'and, 'sdeath, if you answer me not I will scatter your brains. You smell to me like a spy.'

'I am no spy, but a loyal subject of King James.'

'Are you? Then we'll see what papers you carry.'

For answer Aubrey spurred forward, when the

big man, raising his sword, made a sweeping cut which was deftly parried, and then in two or three passes Aubrey ran his blade through the man's basket hilt, gave a wrench, and sent the weapon flying.

While the others greeted this feat with loud guffaws, Aubrey gave his horse the spur and dashed upon them, taking them by surprise. His horse's shoulder collided violently with that of one of the men, and both horse and rider were sent sprawling in the mud. The other four then attacked Aubrey with their swords, but such was the youth's skill that for a few moments he kept them all at bay. He would, in fact, have succeeded in breaking through them had not the leader, who had carefully primed his pistol, basely fired at Aubrey's horse, bringing the beast down with a crash.

Aubrey was thrown over its head, and, the temper of his enemies being aroused, they would have passed their swords through him had not he who fired cried out in harsh tones, 'Hurt him not; if he be a spy we will wring from him what he knows.'

Before Aubrey could recover himself he was roughly seized, and his arms were securely fastened behind him with a strap taken from his saddle wallet.

'You are my prisoner,' said the leader to Aubrey.

'You shall answer to me for this outrage,' cried Aubrey in a passion; 'and as for being your prisoner, who are you?'

'Thomas Dare, of Taunton, colonel of horse in the Protestant army of the Duke of Monmouth, and ready to meet you when and where you like, for I see you have some trick of fence.'

'Protestant army of the Duke of Monmouth?'

echoed Aubrey. 'What vapouring is this? And as to meeting you, untie my arms and we can settle our differences on the spot.'

'No, no; first you must be questioned as to what you know.'

One of the riders had been busy with Aubrey's saddle, and had found the two bags in the holsters. 'It's gold, I verily believe,' he cried.

'Tis indeed a fortunate find then,' said Dare. 'Men we can get in thousands, but money is scarce, and money will buy all we want. To horse; and you, Viney, take this fellow up behind you.'

A bullet in the brain of Aubrey's horse ended its sufferings, and the saddle and bridle being taken by one of the men, Aubrey was mounted behind another. They then rejoined the rest of the troop, and by riding hard that night reached Lyme.

Here the noise and excitement were tremendous; bonfires glowed, hundreds of armed men walked the streets; cries of 'Long live the Duke and the Protestant Religion,' resounded on all sides, while flags and green boughs decorated the streets.

Dare dismounted his prisoner before the largest inn the place possessed, in front of which a good many men and some horses ready saddled and bridled were standing.

He conducted Aubrey to a room in which a number of richly dressed gentlemen were standing or sitting, drinking and talking gaily.

'Your grace,' said Dare, doffing his hat, 'I have been more successful than I hoped for. I have just returned with half-a-hundred good blades added to your cause.'

'Splendid,' said a handsome man at the head of

the table; 'and over eight hundred footmen have joined us to-day. But whom have we here?'

'A prisoner, your grace, whom we captured under suspicious circumstances, and who, I doubt not, is a spy.'

'Nay, Dare, that can hardly be; you see a spy in everybody.'

'Who is not for us is against us,' replied Dare sullenly, and he related how he had captured Aubrey.

'Tut, colonel, you have acted hastily; the lad is a gentleman, or I am much mistaken, and he may be as favourable to our cause as any here. Anyhow, he shall not stand before us thus bound;' and, himself rising from the table, he attempted to unfasten the strap which bound Aubrey's hands, saying the while, I beseech you, sir, forgive the too active zeal of my followers.'

Turning Aubrey round so that the light fell upon the knot, which he had some difficulty in undoing, the gentleman caught sight of the ring which Aubrey still wore upon his finger.

'Odds life, man, what is this?' he cried, seizing Aubrey's now liberated hand and holding it up to the light, where he could the better observe the ring.

'A ring,' replied Aubrey.

'How came you by it? Who are you?'

'Aubrey Berkeley is my name; and since you have been so good as to release my bonds I may inform you that the ring was given to me.'

'By whom? But there, I need not ask. I know that ring as well as my own signet. It belonged to Lady Henrietta Wentworth, and you must have had it from her.'

It was Aubrey's turn to be surprised. 'Why, so I did,' he said. 'Twas given me in return for a service I rendered her ladyship.'

'Then sure you must be a friend of hers, and friend of hers must be friend of mine.'

'And who are you?' asked Aubrey.

'Do you not know me?' replied the gentleman with a laugh.

'I have never seen you in my life that I know of.'

'Many who have never seen me before would know me at once,' replied the gentleman, while some of the others laughed. 'Friend, I am the Duke of Monmouth.'

Aubrey doffed his hat and bowed lowly. 'I humbly crave your grace's pardon,' he said. 'I knew not to whom I was talking.'

'Nay, trouble not,' replied the duke with his winning smile; and patting Aubrey on the shoulder, he said, 'come, eat your fill, and when your hunger is appeased I will beg your company for half-an-hour, for there are many things I would ask you.'

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE SETTLING OF AUBREY'S QUARREL WITH DARE OF TAUNTON.

AS Aubrey seated himself at the table, the scene in which he suddenly found himself an actor filled him with amazement; groups of men stood or sat here and there, all talking loudly, making a perfect babel of voices, while messengers and officers clattered in and out, apparently quite heedless of the duke's presence, he being treated with but scant deference.

Aubrey had not been seated many minutes before a tall, raw-boned man, with wig awry, came in, saying in loud, raucous tones, 'Wha can prevail against the Lord's own. Men and money and arms come pouring in. Not long syne, Dare o' Taunton brought in a troop o' horse, and on their way, 'tis said, they routed some belleegerent cavalry.'

In this demagogue Aubrey at once recognised the man Ferguson, who seemed to be a prime mover in the affair. Great as was his surprise, he could say nothing, and though he suspected Ferguson of being a traitor to both James and Monmouth, he had no proof, and would probably find it very difficult to shake the faith of either party in the man.

Ferguson did not notice the new arrival, but passed on down the room to where the noisiest members were talking and drinking, and above all their voices that of Ferguson rang the loudest.

No sooner had Aubrey finished eating than Mon-

mouth came to him, and, taking him familiarly by the arm, led him to the room which had been set aside for his own private use.

'Now, Mr Berkeley,' he said, waving Aubrey to a chair, 'tell me all the news from my friends, also of yourself, how you got into Dare's hands, and how you are disposed towards my cause.'

The Duke of Monmouth was at that time thirty-six years of age. His figure was tall and graceful, and he was considered one of the handsomest men of his time. To his good looks he united a most pleasing and fascinating manner, which captivated the hearts of both men and women. He had been the favourite son of Charles the Second, who had heaped honours and distinctions upon him. He had shown no mean abilities in the handling of troops, was personally brave, and was so much of an athlete that he could race the fleetest runners, throw the stoutest wrestlers, and was accounted the finest horseman of the day. Before the discovery of the Rye House Plot Monmouth had been the most popular man in England, and much of his popularity he owed to his charming manner. To this charm Aubrey at once succumbed, and felt ready to do anything to serve the duke, short of treason against James.

He told the duke his story, and was heartily thanked for all he had done.

'That mad Lovelace is a headstrong fellow,' said the duke, 'but a most devoted friend of mine. He must have great confidence in you to have entrusted to you this money, of which I am much in need. He informed me of his plans, and the man who would have met you at Crewkerne was one of my officers. Of course Dare had no idea whither you were travel-

ling, or he would not have taken by force that which was coming just as surely peacefully. And now, Mr Berkeley, since you have brought this money, what do you say to accepting the post of superintendent of my finances. At present the salary will not be great, but there are possibilities,' and the duke gave Aubrey a meaning look.

'Your grace,' replied Aubrey, 'I know nothing of this affair yet. I should like, perhaps, to understand more fully'——

'Certainly, I quite take you, no man should act blindly. I am in arms to uphold the Protestant religion and the liberties of the people of England. Take your time to consider the matter, but in the meantime don't go away till I give you leave. People are flocking to my standard in thousands, for I was always popular in the west, but I have not always with me people that I can implicitly trust. It may happen that I should be glad to send a message by you to those who sent you, and if you would thus far serve me you would ever oblige me.'

Before Aubrey had time to raise any objection a gentleman came in, begging instant speech with the duke, nor did Aubrey get another opportunity of speaking to him that night.

The next morning Lyme was in a state of great excitement. The townspeople were madly enthusiastic, recruits came pouring in, and Monmouth's officers were cheered and welcomed wherever they showed themselves.

At breakfast Monmouth introduced Aubrey to his friends, among whom were Lord Grey, who held the position of commander of the cavalry, a nobleman

who in the previous reign had been committed to the Tower, whence he had escaped to Holland; Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, a gallant Scotsman, who had fled from his native land to save his life; Goodenough, once a sheriff in London; Wade, a lawyer; Von Buyse, a German mercenary; and others less well known.

After breakfast Aubrey accompanied the duke to the market-place, where almost the first man they ran up against was the tall, lank Ferguson.

Aubrey and the duke at that moment being alone, the former said, 'Your grace, may I make bold to ask who that man is, and what he has to do with this venture?'

'That is Robert Ferguson,' replied Monmouth, with a quick look at the man. 'He has been mixed up with every pl^t for the last twenty years,' he said in lower tones, 'and is one of the prime movers in this affair.'

'Well, I do not trust him. He it was who led the attack upon Lady Wentworth's coach.'

Monmouth for a moment appeared to be much disturbed at this news. Then he said, 'I will question him about it,' and he called the man to him.

'The wark gangs brawly on, your grace,' replied Ferguson, with a grin at Aubrey as he approached the duke.

'I have, indeed, cause to think that all goes well so far,' replied the duke, 'but I would speak to you of another matter. I have heard that about you which requires some explanation;' and he told him what he had heard of his doings with Jermyn and Talbot.

Aubrey expected the man to be covered with confusion, but he was considerably surprised when Ferguson burst into a loud, hoarse laugh.

'Tis a catch !' he cried ; 'by my saul, 'tis a catch. I have deceived not only mine enemies but also my friends. Oh Robert, Robert, thou hast indeed the cunning of the fox, the subtlety of the serpent. Thou mayest well be called "Ferguson the Plotter," for others are but as fools to thee.'

'That may be,' said Monmouth dryly, 'but it does not explain what I want to know.'

'Man, man,' laughed Ferguson, with that impudent freedom which distinguished him, 'thou art no better than the rest at fathoming a deep motive. As I have already told you, the affair was blawn upon by one whom you will not believe guilty. When Jamie heard that the Lady Wentworth was on her way frae The Hague, and would most likely have valuable documents upon her person, he determined to waylay her and convey her to the Tower. For his own reasons he wanted it done quietly. I learnt the particulars frae that fule Talbot, wha I can turn round my finger, and arranged with him to be of the party. Do you not see ?' and placing one dirty forefinger beside his long, hooked nose, he gave the duke a leer that made Aubrey feel he would like to kick him.

'I admit the reason of your action is not clear to me,' said Monmouth haughtily.

'Why, man, my part was to spoil the game. I led the party by roundabout ways, and it was by the merest chance we cam' up wi' ma leddie's coach at all. Then, while I pretended to quiet the horses, I rendered them so restless that I could not leave

them, the while ma leddie's people bawled for help which I knew must come.'

'Is that why you tried to put a ball in my brain?' asked Aubrey, looking straight at Ferguson.

'A mere make-believe. I couldna ha'e missed ye if I had wanted to hit ye.'

'But would it not have been much better to inform Lady Wentworth's friends of the attempt to be made, so that they could take steps to protect her?' asked Aubrey.

'Wha is this Jackanapes to question me?' cried Ferguson in one of his sudden rages. 'Wha kens onything o' him. If Dare o' Taunton is right, he is nae better than a spy.'

'I will answer for this gentleman,' said Monmouth.

'Then if you doubt me I will ha'e nae mair to do wi' the affair!' and Ferguson was striding off in a rage when the duke called to him and assured him he was quite satisfied with his explanation.

'The fact is,' he said later to Aubrey, 'Ferguson is an extraordinary man, and I fear he cannot be judged by ordinary methods. He it is who has urged me on with might and main to take this step, and he has rendered us important services, for he leads a large number of Dissenters with him. Plots and counterplots are as the very breath of his nostrils to him. Nevertheless, I will keep an eye upon him, though now we have landed and unfurled our banner, he can do us little harm.'

Aubrey had his own ideas about that, but he made no reply.

With such an undertaking on his hands, Monmouth was probably the busiest man in Great Britain, and Aubrey was soon left alone. Hardly realising the

enormous gravity of the events passing around him, he wandered on, an interested spectator of the curious sights around him, when he was accosted by Fletcher of Saltern, to whom the duke had already introduced him. A Scot by birth, Fletcher was distinguished from the others by his lofty and polished bearing, his quiet voice, and refined speech. He was strikingly handsome and of a fine figure, and, as Aubrey afterwards learnt, was head of an old family, being exceedingly proud of his birth, though in manner the most courteous and gentle of men. He had been obliged to fly from Scotland on account of his gallant and determined opposition to the tyrannous and disgraceful administration, first of Lauderdale, and then of Charles's brother and successor, the Duke of York.

To Fletcher, Aubrey had taken a great liking, and greeted him genially.

'Good news, Mr Berkeley,' said Fletcher. 'We have just learnt that the red militia from Dorsetshire and the yellow regiment from Somersetshire have arrived at Bridport. We are marching against them at once, and I am to command the cavalry.'

The excitement was catching, and Aubrey's heart beat with a momentary enthusiasm. Then he recollected that this was a quarrel in which he could not mix, that his duty was to James, and he heaved a half-suppressed sigh.

Drums were beating to quarters, and officers were hurrying to and fro as Fletcher and Aubrey went in search of the duke. They found him in a state of great elation.

'I don't think the militia will fire a shot at us,' he said. 'Tis only a few years since they received me with open arms, and when they understand I

have unfurled my flag to protect their liberties I believe they will come over to me in hundreds. Therefore, Fletcher, ride on quickly with a few cavalry and attempt to win them over to us before blood is spilt and bad feeling engendered.'*

'You could not order me on a more congenial duty,' replied the gallant Scot; 'but as to riding quickly, the horse I possess would not carry me there in a day.'

'Take the best horse in our army,' added Monmouth; 'you have my authority for so doing, not but what any man amongst us would give much more than his horse to further the cause.'

'Tis a pity my own mount was shot by Colonel Dare yesterday,' said Aubrey; 'it was a noble animal, and would have carried you well.'

'Dare should have known better than to destroy what we are so short of,' said Monmouth with a frown; 'but he shall make amends by lending his own horse. Take it, Fletcher, and God speed you.'

Aubrey and Fletcher went off to find Dare, but they failed to do so, and as time was passing, Aubrey suggested that Fletcher should take the horse, on Monmouth's authority, and promised that after Fletcher had departed he would find Dare and explain matters to him.

Accordingly they went to the stable where Dare's horse, a fine chestnut, was; saddled him, and went off to the outskirts of the town, where the cavalry had been ordered to assemble. They had not been there many minutes before Dare, with one or two friends, among them Von Buyse, the German free-lance, came hurrying towards the spot.

* Note B, 'Monmouth's Popularity in the West,' page 317.

As they got near, Aubrey noticed that Dare was very red in the face, and that he had a general appearance of having risen hurriedly from the table after having paid a too liberal attention to the bottle.

'Here, you fellow,' he shouted to Fletcher, 'what the Beelzebub do you mean by taking my horse?'

Fletcher, who had been busy getting his men into order and had not noticed Dare's approach, turned hastily, reddening at the insulting words. He mastered himself, however, and replied, 'I trust you will pardon the liberty, Mr Dare. I am riding at once to Bridport, and it was by the duke's own orders'——

'It's a lie!' cried Dare, in a passion. 'The duke wouldn't order you to steal my horse.'

'*Henkers*, dat is a fine joke!' laughed Buyse, in guttural tones. 'One soldier to take another's horse! Ha, ha!'

'You hear what Buyse says,' said Dare, 'and he knows. He's made campaigns under the greatest soldiers in Europe. Dismount, or I'll pull you down.'

Fletcher's face grew purple with anger, but it was evident that he was making violent efforts to control himself.

'Mr Dare,' he said quietly, though his voice vibrated with excitement, 'you are, I think, hardly master of your words. In quieter moments you would, I am sure, be sorry to think you had hindered the duke's business.'

'How now, you canting puppy, do you dare insinuate that I am not master of my actions?' cried Dare furiously.

'Potztausend!' growled Buyse, 'if a man said dat to me I would call him *Schelm* to his teeth.'

'Ay, rogue I cry to you,' shouted Dare, 'and a measly Scotch rogue too, as afraid, I dare say, of steel as you are of a flagon.'

'Sir,' cried Fletcher, now beside himself with passion at this gross insult, 'recall those words, or I'll thrash you before the men,' and he raised his riding-switch.

'Whip me, you snuffling, Covenanting savage,' cried Dare, in thick tones, and drawing his rapier, he rushed at Fletcher with intent to murder stamped upon his inflamed countenance.

The Scotsman, taken by surprise, must have fallen beneath his steel had not Aubrey, who was on the watch, torn forth his own sword and stepped between them.

'Stop!' he cried, as his blade met Dare's. 'You and I have an old account to settle, and now's the time. Since the talk is of horses, what about mine that you wantonly killed?'

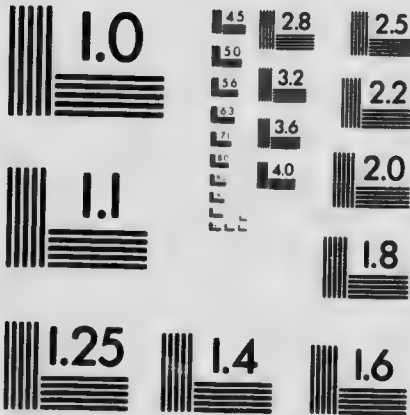
The swords rasped ominously. 'It's you, Mr Coxcomb, is it?' said Dare. 'The Scot will keep till I've paid my debt to you,' and he lunged furiously.

Muddled as he was, he was no match for Aubrey, who in half-a-dozen passes disarmed him and sent his sword flying over his head. The German, however, at the first clash of steel, had drawn his own blade, a great, broad-bladed weapon, and, running to Dare's assistance at the moment when Aubrey disarmed him, took up the attack. Buyse was a big, heavy fellow, and a master of fence in the German style. He attacked fiercely, but with more force and strength than skill, and Aubrey defended



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himself fairly easily, watching out of the corner of his eye, as it were, Fletcher and Dare.

The latter, when he lost his sword, immediately turned his attention to Fletcher, who was anxiously watching Aubrey and Buyse. Taking advantage of the Scotsman's preoccupation, Dare, who was close to him, snatched the riding-whip from his hand.

'Thrash me, would you?' he cried savagely. 'I'll teach you, you beggarly Scotch loon,' and raising the whip he slashed Fletcher brutally across the face.

Stung to fury by this sudden and uncalled for assault, Fletcher, on the spur of the moment, plucked a pistol from his holster, levelled it, and pulled the trigger.

The loud report caused both Aubrey and Buyse to drop the points of their swords, and they saw Dare stand for a second or two immovable, then, with one deep groan, collapse in an ominous manner and fall in a huddled position to the ground. Buyse ran to his side, gave one look at the ghastly face, placed his left hand over his heart, then cried, '*Herr des Himmels, er ist todt*—gone, dead!'

'Dead, dead?' echoed Fletcher, filled with remorse the moment after he had fired. 'Surely not.'

He slid from the saddle and knelt on the opposite side of Dare, Aubrey looking on in absolute stupefaction at the unexpected turn in affairs.

Only a few minutes had passed since Dare's first appearance; the principal actors had been some yards in front of the men, who had remained passive though interested spectators of the strange scene. When Dare fell, many of the troopers, who were the men he had raised at Taunton, came forward, and laying their hands on their sword-hilts began to cry out

loudly for revenge upon Fletcher. The latter faced the excited soldiers calmly.

'Dare brought his fate upon himself,' he said quietly. 'His insulting words I bore, but a blow, and before my own men too! No Fletcher ever brooked such an insult.'

'Cut him down!' 'Run him through!' cried several of the men, drawing their swords.

'No man shall touch him,' answered Aubrey, who still held his drawn sword, throwing himself between the men and the object of their wrath.

'Return your weapons, *Kinder*,' added the great German, rising from the dead man's side. 'This is an affair between gentlemen. Back—it is no work for *Bauerlühmel*.'

The hot-headed west-country yeomen did not understand that Buyse spoke of them as 'churls,' or they would most likely have turned their blades upon the German. As it was, the respect they had for this leader of free-lances caused them to sheathe their weapons and return to their ranks.

'Get you away,' said Buyse to Aubrey and Fletcher. 'We will settle this business later.'

'I will surrender myself to the duke,' said Fletcher haughtily, and accompanied by Aubrey he made for Monmouth's headquarters.

CHAPTER IX.

OF A NIGHT SPENT AT SEA.

THE news of the incident travelled as fast as did Aubrey and Fletcher, and a buzz of conversation was going on round the duke when they arrived. Monmouth looked very stern.

‘What is this I hear?’ he cried, with vexation in his tones. ‘My officers quarrelling amongst themselves, weapons drawn, and blood spilt. Mr Fletcher, I am ashamed of you.’

Fletcher bowed gravely to the duke. ‘Your grace,’ he replied, ‘I surrender myself to your pleasure. God knows, I would give my right hand to undo the work of the last half-hour, but my temper was sorely tried. Dare not only addressed to me the most insulting language I have ever had to listen to, but he even struck me. In a moment of anger I drew a pistol on him and fired; but, as God will judge me, I had no intent to kill.’

‘Ay, ay,’ broke in Ferguson, who was near the duke, ‘ye were ever a hot-tempered fule, Fletcher o’ Saltoun, and now ye’ll ha’e to pay for this.’

With an angry glance at the man, Aubrey interposed. ‘If I may be allowed to speak, your grace,’ he said, ‘this gentleman,’ pointing to Fletcher, ‘acted but as any other gentleman in your suite would have done. Dare most grossly insulted him, and though, time after time, Mr Fletcher spoke him fair, he grew more violent, and at last, drawing his sword, rushed

upon Mr Fletcher, and taking him unawares would have murdered him had I not interposed.'

At this moment the big German, his red face perspiring under his steel cap, came stamping up in his great boots, his sword-scabbard and spurs ringing on the stones.

'*Ja, ja! der Junker* speaks troof,' he said, giving the duke a curt military salute. 'Dare was mine friendt, and I am ready to take up his quarrel. But, pouf! it is an affair of soldiers, not of the *Henker*—vhat you call him, hangman.'

This uncalled-for testimony in favour of Fletcher had some effect, but Dare's friends continued to call aloud for vengeance.

'Peace, all,' said the duke. 'I will inquire into the matter myself, but at the moment can do nothing; more important affairs claim my attention.—Mr Fletcher, you will consider yourself a prisoner in your quarters, and will remain there till I make my decision known to you.—Mr Berkeley, will you oblige me by acting as his custodian? By doing so you will be serving the ends of justice as much as though you were escorting a prisoner to Whitehall for James of York.'

Aubrey bowed, and placing a hand on Fletcher's arm, led him to the inn where he was stopping. Fletcher was terribly upset at the thought of having taken a human life unfairly; and when he and Aubrey were alone he over and over again expressed his willingness to submit to whatever punishment the duke might think fit to inflict upon him.

An hour or so later, Monmouth himself entered the room and desired that the occurrence should be related to him from the beginning. 'Tis monstrous un-

fortunate,' he said, when he had heard all. 'You, Fletcher, and Lord Grey, were the two men on whom I counted most in this enterprise, and now, at the very outset, I must lose your services. Ferguson and a large following of Dare's friends are clamouring for me to have you hanged as an example.'

'I am ready, your grace, to expiate my crime.'

'No, I will not suffer it; I firmly believe it was a pure accident, though a most unfortunate one, and your own conscience will be sufficient punishment. I will not have your blood upon my hands, though I cannot see how to get you out of this scrape unless Mr Berkeley can suggest a way.'

Aubrey coloured on being appealed to, but answered readily, 'The simplest method would be for Mr Fletcher to get out of the way until the affair blows over. Your followers will soon, in all probability, have other things to think of.'

'Odds fish, as my father used to say, so we all shall. Mr Berkeley, if you can manage this matter for me I shall be ever in your debt. When happier times come we shall be able to investigate the occurrence properly, and will then see what amends Fletcher can make to Dare's family. For the present, get him away, but it must be done quietly. I will see that at about six o'clock most of the leaders shall be with me in council, and Dare's men shall be sent on some duty that will take them inland. Then get away by boat to the *Helderenbergh*, and bide there till you can get to some foreign country. But remember, I must not appear in the matter.'

Taking a short farewell, he then departed, and Fletcher and Aubrey began discussing the best way of escaping observation when getting out to the

Helderenbergh, which was the vessel that had brought over the adventurers, and with the master of which Fletcher was well acquainted.

They soon decided that Fletcher should adopt the disguise of a countryman, and Aubrey went off in order to procure the clothes. It had commenced to rain heavily, and there were very few people about; but Aubrey noticed a man in a horseman's cloak, who was standing in the shelter of a doorway on the opposite side of the street. Aubrey crossed and passed close to this man, when in spite of the fellow's attempt to conceal his features he saw that it was Ferguson. Having made this unpleasant discovery, he hurried on, wondering what new mischief the man was meditating, for it seemed that some misfortune always followed the appearance of the sinister-looking spy. When Aubrey returned with the clothing, Ferguson was nowhere to be seen; but on looking from the window some half-hour later, he, with several other men, passed the inn, looking stealthily up at it as he did so.

'I am certain that fellow is no more true to Monmouth than to James,' said Aubrey, 'and his presence here can bode us no good.'

'Oh there is no love lost between Ferguson and me,' replied Fletcher. 'Tis said that Scotsmen ever cling together, which may be mostly true enough; but when they do fall out they make bitter enemies. If Ferguson could harm me he certainly would.'

'Well, we're at least forewarned,' said Aubrey, 'and we shall do well to be careful.'

The evening turned out a drenching wet one, and Fletcher, having adopted his disguise, he and Aubrey, choosing a time when the street was quite empty,

stepped forth, and, passing through the steep and narrow alleys, went down the cliffs and so to the beach. Having arrived there they made toward the few fishermen's huts to try and engage a boat; but to their disappointment not a solitary one was to be seen.

Being rather surprised at this, they walked to the end of the pier, then known as the Cob, but in the haven it enclosed there was not one fisherman's vessel.

'Tis an extraordinary thing,' said Aubrey.

'Nay, 'tis nothing more than the work of Ferguson,' replied Fletcher gloomily. 'He wants to prevent my getting away so that he and his friends may prevail on Monmouth to take my life. The duke can never long withstand the importunities of any one, and Ferguson boasts he can turn him round his finger.'

'Well, Ferguson has made a miscalculation for once,' said Aubrey doggedly; 'tis too far to swim off to the *Helderenbergh* in this choppy sea; but I believe that some two or three miles over the cliffs is a little fishing village, where I doubt not we shall be able to obtain a boat.'

They were turning back along the Cob, holding their hats on, for the wind was very gusty, when Fletcher clutched Aubrey's arm.

'Look!' he cried, 'talk of the evil one and you'll see his horns.' He pointed to one of the cottages, and there, standing in the doorway, was Ferguson.

'Why on earth doesn't he come forward like a man and either arrest us or dispute our way,' said Aubrey angrily.

'That would never do for Ferguson. He could, no doubt, have prevailed on Monmouth to prevent my going, but that would have given him no pleasure.

To plot and outwit us, to catch us in a trap, that is what he wants to do. Plotting is the very salt of the man's life; underhand work is his delight. To outwit us would give him more pleasure than to see us hanged.'

'He shall do neither,' said Aubrey. 'See, he has disappeared; we'll make as if going back to the town, and then go on to the village of Kerswell.'

This plan they followed, and after a heavy tramp, during which they were soaked to the skin, they reached Kerswell about ten at night.

There another disappointment awaited them; only one boat was available, and the owner of that was lying at home ill, and quite incapable of rowing out to the *Helderenbergh*. However, on Aubrey representing that the matter was urgent, and on Fletcher producing a guinea, it was arranged that the fisherman should lend the gentlemen his boat, that they should row themselves out to the vessel, and that either Aubrey or one of the sailors from the *Helderenbergh* should return the boat to its owner.

This being arranged, the two proceeded to the beach, where, seeing that the oars were in the boat, they freed her from the chains that held her, and ran her down to the sea.

Neither, however, were expert sailors, and they experienced considerable difficulty in their task. The boat was once dashed back on the beach and they feared was stove in; but she was strongly made, and though a plank or two might have been started, no further damage was done. At the second attempt they managed to launch her, and drenched with the cold sea-water and very considerably bruised, they found themselves afloat. Seizing the great clumsy

oars, they had to pull with all their might to prevent the boat from being again dashed upon the beach, and at last, as well as the dim light would allow, they saw they had got some distance from the shore. They then began to pull with might and main in the direction of the *Helderenbergh*, being guided by a signal light which burnt on top of the cliffs at Lyme.

The rain still continued to fall in torrents, and the sea was very lumpy, making the work of rowing exceedingly difficult. Aubrey and his companion pulled and pulled till the perspiration ran down their faces, but their progress was exceedingly slow. To add to their difficulties, from the water arose a mist, which in less than half-an-hour grew so thick as to prevent them from seeing five yards ahead of their boat. They, however, pulled on, trusting to chance to guide them to the vessel; but after a good hour's work, so exhausted were they that they gave it up and lay rocking on the heaving water. Their lack of success was disappointing, and they were sitting without speaking when the sound of oars working in rowlocks fell upon their ears. Fletcher, with his characteristic impetuosity, was going to hail the boat and ask for assistance, but Aubrey warned him that it might just as likely contain enemies as friends. This warning was very timely, for on the boat getting nearer voices could be heard, and both at once recognised Ferguson's amongst them.

'The de'il tak' this mist,' he was saying; 'we were bound to ha'e seen them if it had remained clear, and noo they'll just slip by unobserved.'

'They'll have to be wide awake to make the ship in this weather,' growled another voice.

'Fule,' replied Ferguson angrily, 'it's no' worse for them than for us. They'll circle round till they reach the ship, for that'll be their object. And if they get there they can snap their fingers at Robert Ferguson,' he concluded angrily, 'whilk is what very few people ha'e done.'

'Mayhap we'll run across them yet,' growled another voice.

'A crown to every man o' ye if ye do,' said Ferguson.

Meanwhile their boat had been getting nearer and nearer, till a sort of thickening in the haze showed the fugitives that they could not be more than a few yards away. Aubrey and Fletcher gripped their weapons grimly and waited in painful expectancy, determined to make a struggle for their lives; but, to their relief, Ferguson's boat passed without discovering them, when they both heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction.

'This fog has stood our friend,' whispered Aubrey fervently.

'And it's a good job I didn't hail,' agreed Fletcher. 'You seem to be my guardian spirit, Mr Berkeley.'

Allowing Ferguson time to get out of hearing, they then took up their oars again and rowed gently on, but the fog still hung upon the water. As day drew near it grew very cold, and they occasionally dozed; but they managed to keep the boat's head to the waves through the weary hours, till at last dawn broke, the fog lifted, the sun came out, and they were enabled to see about them.

They discovered that they were some four miles out at sea, and that the *Helderenbergh* lay between

them and the shore. Joyfully they rowed to her, and were soon aboard and in the captain's snug cabin.

Matters were explained, and while Aubrey and Fletcher were changing their sodden clothes for warm and dry ones, a substantial breakfast was prepared, to which they and the captain did ample justice. After that they turned in for a few hours' sleep. Both were very fatigued, nor was it till the afternoon that Aubrey awoke. His own clothes, dried, brushed, and neatly laid out, were beside his bunk, and he quickly rose, dressed, and went on deck.

Fletcher and the captain were in deep conversation, looking towards the shore. As Aubrey joined them, Fletcher said sounds of firing, coming from the direction of Bridport, had been heard, and that he was wild to learn what had happened and how his friends had fared.

'I will at once go ashore,' said Aubrey, 'and, if it is in my power, will send you word what has happened.'

He and Fletcher took a cordial farewell of each other; then Aubrey entered the boat in which the sailors sat ready to row ashore. They towed behind them the boat in which Fletcher had borrowed, and, after landing Aubrey, this was returned to the fisherman with a second guinea from Aubrey for its use.

CHAPTER X.

HOW MONMOUTH WAS DECLARED KING.

THE spot where Aubrey was landed was in a little cove situated between Lyme and Bridport. There was a rough path, partly natural, partly cut out, that led up the cliffs, and climbing this Aubrey got on to the road from Lyme to Bridport.

He was stepping out at a good pace towards Lyme, when several horsemen, some hatless, some with naked swords in their hands, some with blood-stained rags round head or limb, and all splashed with mud as though they had ridden hard, came trotting by him. Aubrey moved on one side of the road to let these cavaliers pass, none of whom took any notice of him. A second small group followed, then, recognising that they were some of Monmouth's men, Aubrey asked for news.

'Bad, bad,' replied a rider whose arm was in a sling. 'We engaged the enemy this morning, when Lord Grey with most of the cavalry fled. Wade, with us and the infantry, had to bear the brunt of the fight; and, though we held our own, we lost heavily,' and the man rode on.

Aubrey thought for a moment, then turned his steps towards Bridport and about a mile farther down the road came in sight of a long, straggling column of Monmouth's foot, Wade the lawyer, who had fought valiantly and handled his men well, leading them. Recognising Aubrey, Wade gave him particulars of the fight.

'Although Grey fled,' he said, 'we defeated the militia, many of whom afterwards came over to us;' and Aubrey could see a good many men, some in the Dorset red, others in the Somersetshire yellow, marching with the rebels.

Wade calling to a mounted man to give him some instructions as Aubrey was marching along with the column, when he heard his name mentioned, and a young officer in a buff coat seized him by the hand. 'Well met, Master Berkeley,' he cried; 'so this is where you were bound for, eh?'

'Will Hewling, as I live!' said Aubrey, in surprise.

'Himself, and Benjamin is with the cavalry. We knew of the attempt before we left London, and came down to join it. I returned only this morning from a duty the duke had sent me on, just in time to march against the militia at Bridport; and though we lost a good few, we held our own, and have gained a lot of friends,' and he pointed to the militiamen who followed.

'But I hear the cavalry fled at the first fire.'

'They did; but I think 'twas more because the horses, rough country animals, got frightened and bolted at the reports of the firearms than from any want of courage in the riders. Some remained with us and fought right valiantly, and Wade is a far better general than ever he was a lawyer. We may safely claim this as a victory.'

'A victory against your king,' said Aubrey sadly. 'This is rebellion.'

'Tut, man, 'tis a victory for the cause of liberty over bigotry. Cromwell fought for the liberty of Parliament; we fight for liberty of conscience. Let

the king give equal justice to all his subjects, both Protestants and Catholics, and we lay down our arms.'

Not wishing to discuss this matter further, Aubrey told Hewling about his adventures during the night.

'It is a pity,' said Hewling. 'Fletcher is a good soldier and a gallant gentleman.' Thus chatting, they trudged on to Lyme, where they were received as victors with great acclamation.

At supper that night Aubrey was honoured with a seat next to Monmouth, and the duke, with that charm of manner which was peculiarly his own, thanked him over and over again for saving Fletcher, the *Helderenbergh* having weighed anchor and departed.

The next morning all were early astir. Recruits were coming in by hundreds, and arming and drilling went on all day. The two Hewlings were very busy, and heart and soul in the work.

Aubrey asked permission of Monmouth to depart, but the duke begged him to stay a little longer. 'I do not ask you to take any active part,' he said, 'but I want some one by me on whom I can depend to take a message to certain friends of mine, in case of necessity, and there is no one here I could trust so well as you.'

During the next few days there was a great deal of marching and countermarching, mad enthusiasm, and chilling doubt.

In a skirmish at Axminster, the hastily assembled trainbands were defeated, then Monmouth, in high spirits, moved on to Taunton.

Recruits flocked in, but there were no weapons,

many being armed only with scythe-blades stuck on the ends of long poles.

At Taunton, Monmouth, persuaded by Ferguson and others like him, made the fatal mistake of assuming the royal title, and as confusion might have arisen had he called himself King James, he adopted the strange appellation of King Monmouth, by which title he was spoken of in the west for many years after his death.

This assumption of the royal title opened Aubrey's eyes. He saw what was really the object of the insurrection, and he shrank from it with the abhorrence of one taught all his life to venerate royalty and monarchy, brought face to face with treason and armed force against the lawful king. He determined at once to get an interview with Monmouth, and to tell him he was leaving him; but all that day the duke was so busy Aubrey could not get speech with him. He had long talks with the Hewlings, however, but they were heart and soul for Monmouth.

The morning after the declaration the army started for Bridgwater, and as they marched Aubrey noticed that Monmouth looked pale, worn, and dejected, apparently taking no interest in the proceedings, being more like one who was the unwitting tool than the leader. On the other hand, Ferguson swaggered along, often brandishing a naked sword, shouting scraps of texts or boasting that he was Ferguson, the celebrated plotter, who could make kings and unmake them, and for whose head a reward of five thousand pounds was offered. Beneath all the man's braggadocio there was such an air of cunning that Aubrey shrank from him in loathing, feeling more and more convinced that the fellow was a double traitor, and that

at the first sign of defeat he would go over to James, where he would be as much at home as he was with Monmouth.

Ever since the escape of Fletcher, Ferguson had taken no notice whatever of Aubrey, but the latter felt perfectly certain that the spy had by no means forgotten him. He was simply waiting his opportunity, and the thought gave Aubrey a feeling as though cold water were being poured down his back.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW AUBREY DECLARED FOR KING JAMES, BUT FOUGHT FOR KING MONMOUTH.

ON the arrival of the army at Bridgwater the duke and his immediate followers were lodged in the castle. His troops, now amounting to about six thousand foot and one thousand horse, were encamped in the castle field.

The two brothers Hewling had excellent quarters in the town, where, on their first night in Bridgwater, Aubrey supped with them. Aubrey was himself lodged in the castle, but he had no wish to be present at the somewhat noisy meals of the leaders of the expedition.

Moreover, he had determined that night to see Monmouth and announce his intention of departing.

On returning to the castle he was unable to see the duke until late, he being engaged with several of the principal townspeople.

'Ah Mr Berkeley,' he said as Aubrey entered his presence, 'you are ever welcome; you put me in mind of dear friends and happier days.'

'Your kind words touch me, your grace; yet I am here to announce my departure.'

Monmouth's face fell.

'Truly I am unfortunate,' he said. 'All those I love and esteem most seem doomed to leave me. Fletcher I had to send away to save his life, Grey is in disgrace, and now you, my youngest friend, want to go before I have an opportunity of re-

warding you for the services you have rendered me.'

'I fear any services I may have done you were either unwitting or unwilling.'

'Nay, that will I never believe. Come, Mr Berkeley, will you not throw in your lot with us? I have heard that before your father was your age he had given hard knocks in the field for my grandfather.'

'My father, indeed, risked all for Charles the Martyr, as I am ready to do for his son James, who is the rightful king.'

'Tis a question for Parliament to decide, Mr Berkeley, whether a Papist can lawfully sit on the throne of England.'

'Your grace will pardon me saying that I do not see in that any excuse for your taking up arms and assuming the title of king. James has been accepted by the unanimous voice of the country.'

The duke assumed a confidential manner. 'I cannot explain all to you now,' he said; 'but when we reach London light will be thrown on much that at present seems doubtful. Remain with me, and you shall find that when prosperity smiles upon me I shall not forget my friends.'

'Prosperity seems now to smile upon you,' said Aubrey. 'I tremble for James on the throne; but my duty is to him, and I will not fight against him.'

'Odds bobs, man,' cried the duke in some heat, 'what is there you can see in this dull, bigoted uncle of mine to admire so. If your duty is to your king, is it not equally so to your Church?'

'Such a question is hard to answer. If it is ever

put before the country, every man will have to follow his own conscience. At present, I see only my duty to my king, and respectfully beg leave to retire.'

'Which, frankly, I cannot give, Mr Berkeley. You know far too much to be allowed to ride to London with the news. You must remain with me, either as my friend or as my prisoner.'

It was now Aubrey's turn to flush up.

'Sir, you wrong me,' he cried hotly. 'But since you judge me to be so base, so be it. I will remain as your prisoner.'

In an instant Monmouth had repented his hasty words, and seized Aubrey's hand.

'Nay, 'fore God, I meant not those words. I know you are as brave and true a gentleman as any in England; but I am bound to be careful, for my friends criticise severely all my actions, and were I to let you depart, odds my life, I doubt not some would say you had gone secretly to James for me, to make terms for myself. Remain in the castle for a few days, and then you shall be free to depart whither you will.'

Thus ended the interview, and Aubrey saw that he was, indeed, in a very delicate situation. That, however, did not prevent him from sleeping well, and he awoke in the morning feeling fresh and prepared for anything that might happen.

As Aubrey ascended to the roof of the castle to enjoy the early morning air he saw that the foot, which had been divided into six regiments, were being drilled in the castle fields; while the horse were at exercise some distance beyond. He thought he would stroll over and watch the latter, but on reaching the sentinel on the gate he was politely

informed that he could not be allowed to pass; on appealing to the officer in charge he was told that the orders came from the governor.

Aubrey at once went to the governor, who politely said the duke himself had given the order, on which Aubrey resigned himself to his fate.

The leaders of the expedition, however, whom Aubrey met at meal-times, told him all the news without reserve. During the next few days he learnt that the Blues, under Lord Churchill, had arrived from London, and were daily harassing the duke's men; that the Life Guards were on their way, and that Lord Feversham, with a great body of foot and dragoons, was following.

The weather was terribly wet and the insurgents were inactive for a few days; then, leaving Bridgwater, they marched to Glastonbury, where the rain again caught them, and they moved to Wells and Shepton Mallet.

One evening the governor, who had always treated Aubrey kindly, sent for him.

'Mr Berkeley,' he said, 'it has grieved me to keep you a prisoner so long, but I was obliged to obey orders. Now, however, I can offer you your liberty if you will agree to carry a letter from me to the duke, who is before Bristol.'

'I will do anything that will enable me to end this deadly inactivity and will give me the opportunity of getting a horse between my legs again,' said Aubrey cheerfully.

'Then at dusk you shall have the letter, though I tell you candidly it is a dangerous mission I entrust you with, for the road between here and Bristol is patrolled by the royal troops, and should the letter

be found on you, you would receive scant mercy ; besides, Monmouth's cause would be terribly damaged.'

'Make your letter into a small compass. I will see that it is not found if I should be captured ; but I am King James's man, so need not fear his soldiers.'

'You must promise me, as a gentleman, that you will deliver the letter to none but the duke himself, and that should occasion arise you will guard it with your life. On no other conditions can I release you.'

'I promise ; so now to your letter, while I see to horse and arms.' And so, just as the shades of evening fell, Aubrey found himself leaving the castle, with pistols loaded and primed ; for, in spite of what he had said about being King James's man, he felt that it would be as well to keep out of the clutches of the royal troops, for he had not forgotten the abrupt way in which he had been dismissed from Whitehall, or the cause and fashion of his leaving London.

From Bridgwater to Bristol is nearly thirty miles as the crow flies ; and, with roads in the bad condition they then were from the incessant rain, Aubrey had no mean task in front of him, yet his heart was light as he set out to face it. Both he and his steed were in the very pink of condition, and in spite of all difficulties, made good progress.

Aubrey rode with every sense on the alert, and though he had to make one or two small detours to avoid suspicious parties of men, travelling by way of Badgworth, Sandford, and Yatton, in the early hours of the morning he found himself not more than five miles from Bristol.

During the last mile or so he had noticed a red reflection in the sky, and as he got nearer and nearer to the town, at that time the first English seaport,

and second only to London in importance, the glare of a huge conflagration became quite apparent.

'Are Monmouth's men already in the town, and have they fired it?' were Aubrey's first thoughts as he halted at the cross roads and gazed at the red glare. A brighter flame than ever flashed up towards the sky, and it became evident that the shipping on the broad bosom of the Severn was on fire.

Tired of speculating as to the meaning of the scene before him, Aubrey shook up his tired horse into a trot, when the loud trampling of hoofs, accompanied by that metallic ring and jing'le which he had already learned to distinguish as belonging to soldiers, struck upon his ear. While he was uncertain whether to pause or go on, the riders, advancing at a smart trot, rapidly approached him, and before he could get out of sight the advanced files had seen him. A shout caused him to stop, and two troopers, with a corporal in charge, rode up to him.

'Who are you, and what make you abroad at this time of night?' asked the corporal gruffly.

'I am a private gentleman, and am riding to Bristol.'

'Ay, many a man seems riding to Bristol to-night on one excuse or another. And in this west country of yours private gentlemen are often public traitors.—Jarvis,' he cried to a trooper, 'take him back to the captain.—We are riding to Bristol, and you can ride with us, young sir. I'll warrant you a safe escort,' and the corporal laughed grimly.

Seeing he had accidentally fallen in with a troop of the king's horse, and remembering the letter he carried, Aubrey knew he would have to be most careful in his conduct. He had heard that the troops

were carrying things with a very high hand, and that without waiting to ask questions the officers had a way of at once settling, with a rope over the nearest branch, the business of suspected persons. He therefore rode quietly beside the trooper till he reached the head of the squadron, when the soldier, saluting the leader, said, 'Corporal Bates sent this man back for you to question, captain. He says he is riding to Bristol.'

'Sink me if he may not ride to a much warmer place for all I care,' replied a voice from the folds of a horseman's great cloak, 'though Bristol looks warm enough at this minute.' He gave Aubrey one keen glance, then said, 'What's your name?'

'Berkeley, captain.'

'Well, give him in charge of the leading file with the other fellow. I'll look into the matter later; if he's a rebel I'll hang him in revenge for having to march all this miserable way from Chippenham, if he's a loyal man he'll be glad of our company.' So saying, the captain again buried his head in the collar of his cloak and apparently dismissed the matter from his thoughts.

Reaching the leading file of the troop, Aubrey's conductor said to a soldier, 'Tresham, look after this man till we get into Bristol.'

The trooper thus addressed looked at Aubrey and he at the soldier, then both broke into exclamations of surprise.

'Ralph!'

'Aubrey, as I live!' And the two shook hands.

'Man alive,' cried Ralph, 'what on earth are you doing down in this benighted place?'

'Simply on my way to Bristol,' replied Aubrey.

'Zounds! so are we; may a nurrain fall on him who caused it. I had to turn out of the most comfortable quarters I've had since I left London.'

'I see you've managed to get into the king's coat.'

'Nothing easier; my father presented me to his Majesty, and while I was waiting for my appointment, along comes a rumour that the Duke of Monmouth is meditating a descent from Holland, and Jamie is mad to raise more soldiers.

English regiments who are in the pay of Holland were sent for, and the ranks of the Guards were picked up. I was offered a place in the queen's Life Guards, which I, of course, accepted; and here I am.'

'You succeeded in obtaining, very easily, what I asked for in vain.'

'Is that so? Come, brother, tell me what has happened to you since we parted, for I have never heard a word of you. Have you been living in the west, and have you seen the duke, who I always thought was the most popular man in England, and a very pretty man to boot.'

'I have, indeed, seen him,' said Abrey, in low tones.

'Egad, I believe you are a good man,' replied Ralph in a similar voice, 'and I want to say you're not on the winning side? James seems of a sour nature, and many people wish the duke well.'

'That's dangerous talk for a king's man; and, moreover, I am quite of opinion that the duke is in the wrong, and advise you not to speak too loudly in his favour.'

'Serious as ever!' laughed Ralph. 'Well, tell me all about yourself, and remember you are my prisoner, so be civil.'

Aubrey told him some of his adventures, to which Ralph listened, keeping up a running fire of questions until they were near enough to Bristol to see plainly the burning shipping floating about on the river. Then the order was given for the troop to close up, and at last they clattered into Bristol without meeting with any opposition. On the citizens learning that they were king's troops they were heartily welcomed, and crossing the river, they cantered along Redcliff Hill and rode on to the church of St Mary Redcliff, where the Duke of Beaufort was keeping his small garrison under arms. He was very glad to see the royal troops, for a vast number of citizens were in favour of Monmouth, and there had been great difficulty in overawing them. It was asserted that they had set fire to the shipping in the hope that, while the trainbands were engaged putting out the flames, Monmouth would enter the town from the Somersetshire side. But the Duke of Beaufort was made in a stern mould. He would see Bristol burned down—nay, he would burn it down himself—rather than it should be occupied by traitors, he said, and he sat grimly in his saddle at the head of his men till the royal troops arrived.

On arriving in the town, Aubrey was sent to an inn in Thomas Street, together with another civilian named Fairholt, who had ridden in from Chippenham with the Guards, having joined them there, being determined to see something of the campaign. On looking at him in the light, Aubrey noticed that he was a tall, well-built young fellow, about his own age, and, strangely enough, very much like him in looks and complexion. Fairholt himself noticed the likeness, and laughingly remarked upon it.

The town was in a great uproar, and troops were patrolling the streets, for none knew whether, or at what moment, Monmouth might arrive.

Aubrey and Fairholt were told not to leave the house; so, after watching the scenes in the streets for some time, Fairholt, saying he was tired out, seated himself in a chair by the fire, which on account of the wet had been lighted, and soon fell asleep.

Freed from all restraint, Aubrey began to think of the possibility of making his escape, for he was anxious to deliver his letter and so wash his hands of the whole affair.

Where to find Monmouth he, of course, did not know, but he imagined the duke must be somewhere between Bridgwater and Bristol. He descended the stairs, meeting with no opposition, and went out into the street. Excited groups of people were talking loudly, some of the fire, some of the soldiers, some of Monmouth, and from overhearing their remarks Aubrey soon learnt that Monmouth was supposed to be at Pensford.

He went back to his inn, where he found that, though no watch was kept on him, his horse was locked in the stable, and this fact rather upset his calculations. He decided to bide his time, so returning to the room where Fairholt was, he too indulged in a nap.

When he awoke the sun was shining. Fairholt having also awoke, the pair breakfasted, and then the recruit, calling for his horse, in spite of the orders he had received not to leave the house, announced his intention of setting out to find the commander of the troop.

Aubrey said he would accompany him, the horses

were brought, and both mounted. But in the narrow streets they were often obliged to ride one behind the other. Taking advantage of a delay, caused through a number of people crossing the street ahead of them, Aubrey turned his horse into a side street, made for Pipe Lane, crossed the bridge, and in a few minutes had left the town and headed eastward.

The farther he got from the town the faster he went, till, all fear of pursuit over, he drew rein and considered his next move. He soon concluded it would be best to make straight for Pensford, and accordingly inquired the way of a rustic, who he afterwards discovered sent him a good five miles round. After riding double the distance he ought to have done, Aubrey, from the summit of the hills he was crossing, saw below him Monmouth's army, not at Pensford, but at Keynsham, whither they had marched since daybreak. He at once spurred on towards them, but had not gone far when he saw advancing upon Keynsham, as though to take it by surprise, a party of the royal cavalry.

In an instant Aubrey's blood was leaping in his veins. There would be an encounter, men with whom he had lived and eaten would be fighting for their lives, and they would be taken by surprise too. This must not be; at least he must warn them, though he could not fight for them. Recklessly he galloped on, alarming the outposts, to whom he shouted and waved his handkerchief. They did not know what he meant, but they let him pass, and soon he was in the small town, shouting aloud to be led to Monmouth.

By great good chance he came across Benjamin Hewling, and to him he cried, 'Rouse your men, Benjamin, the king's troops are on you!'

The cry was taken up, and in two minutes, five score roughly mounted men trotted out of the town as the drums beat to quarters behind them. Aubrey, forgetting in the excitement of the moment all about the letter he had to deliver, placing himself by Benjamin Hewling's side, trotted out to meet the royal cavalry. Nor had they far to go, for at a bend in the road the scarlet coats, white feathers, and flashing sword-blades of the Life Guards burst upon their sight. The royal troops paused but to fire their pistols, then, sitting firmly down in their saddles and shouting exultantly, with a flash of sword-blades they broke upon the rebels.

The shock was tremendous, and men and horses went down on both sides; then the disciplined soldiers broke through the rebel ranks, reformed behind them, and with another mighty cheer, charged them again.

Without ever knowing how it happened, Aubrey found himself parrying the cuts aimed at him by the powerful, fierce-eyed, scarlet-clad Guardsmen, and in turn he cut and hacked, bearing his part as manfully as any rebel among them.

The fighting seemed to divide itself into groups, and Aubrey was one of a little knot of combatants who wheeled and circled, cutting and thrusting viciously. Into the midst of this group a couple of troopers charged furiously; the shoulder of one's horse caught Aubrey's mount so heavily on the side that both horse and rider rolled over amongst the trampling hoofs; but, owing to the fall, Aubrey missed the sword-stroke aimed at him. For a moment only he lay dazed upon the ground, then he was on his feet again, sword in hand.

Benjamin Hewling was very hard pressed by two

troopers, and Aubrey, seeing his danger, went to his assistance. For a space, Aubrey on foot, Hewling mounted, they kept the Life Guardsmen at bay. Then a passing trooper slashed savagely at Hewling's horse. The animal, with a human-like cry, reared up, throwing Hewling, who, falling heavily on the road, lay stunned. He must have been killed had not Aubrey sprung forward, and standing over his body gallantly defended him.

At this point of the skirmish a party of Monmouth's infantry, mostly armed with scythes on poles, who had started out from Keynsham after the horse, arrived upon the scene. Perceiving this, the royal cavalry, who had inflicted considerable losses, thought it time to retire.

One trooper, however, seeing Aubrey still unconquered, coming up from behind, made a cut which was parried; then, seizing the man by the left leg, Aubrey gave a tremendous heave, and threw him right out of the saddle. As the trooper's frightened horse galloped away, Aubrey placed a foot on the man's chest, and holding his sword's point within a few inches of his neck, cried, 'Yield yourself prisoner, or I strike.'

'Why, it's Aubrey again,' said a voice, and the man's hat having fallen off in the struggle, Aubrey recognised his old friend Ralph Tresham.

'Faith, Ralph,' he cried, 'I almost had your blood upon my hands, but you must yield yourself prisoner now.'

Before Ralph could answer, two of Monmouth's infantry had rushed up, and one armed with a formidable scythe-headed pole advanced his weapon to strike it into Ralph.



C. F.

'Let I gi'e un a poho wi' this.'

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'Hold!' cried Aubrey; 'this man is my prisoner.'

'We doan't want pris'ners,' replied the man. 'Stand azide, measter, and let I gi'e un a poke wi' this,' and he thrust forward his scythe.

'Touch him not, on peril of your life,' said Aubrey. 'He is my prisoner.'

'Zounds! thou beest too squeamish, measter. I'll make zure of un.'

Aubrey sprang in front of the fellow, but his companion rushed by, saying, 'I'll tickle un vor thee, Tom. I'se warrant I'll cure un of all ills.' Then, clubbing his heavy musket, he would have beaten out Ralph's brains; but the young trooper had now struggled to his feet and faced his uncouth foe.

Aubrey, meanwhile, had grappled with the scythe-man, and was struggling with him for the possession of the deadly weapon.

At that instant a couple of troopers, hurrying along to overtake their disappearing comrades, came upon the scene. They saw Ralph's peril, and while one cut down the man with the musket and helped Ralph up before him on the saddle, the other struck Aubrey over the head with his heavy sword, then went to his comrade's assistance.

'Fool!' cried out Ralph, in a rage, 'you have killed my friend, the man who saved my life;' and with these words ringing in his ears, Aubrey sank to the ground insensible.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW AUBREY AGAIN MET THE MYSTERIOUS COLONEL.

WHEN Aubrey came to his senses he was lying on a bed in a house in Keynsham. His head was bound up in a blood-stained cloth, and ached most fearfully. He turned his eyes round the darkened apartment, and saw both the Hewlings sitting by the bedside.

'Thank God you are come out of your swoon!' said Benjamin fervently. 'I was sore afraid your hurt was mortal.'

'I am glad to see you got off safely,' murmured Aubrey faintly.

'Bruises only,' answered Benjamin quietly. 'But you must rest.'

'First, what of the fight?'

'The king's soldiers galloped off as soon as our infantry appeared; we lost fourteen men, but we inflicted heavier loss on them, and captured three prisoners, from whom, 'tis said, the duke hath got much valuable information.'

'Where is the duke? I have a letter for him,' said Aubrey, suddenly recollecting.

Benjamin Hewling went off in search of him, and presently Monmouth, with that courtesy that so distinguished him, entered the room, and taking Aubrey by the hand, said that he was more pleased to learn that he was not seriously wounded than at his late victory over the king's troops.

Aubrey produced his letter, which he had hidden

in the skirt of his coat, then again relapsed into a semi-conscious state.

When he awoke next time, his wound had been properly dressed, and one of the surgeons who accompanied the army was sitting by him. He administered a soothing draught, and after a good night's rest, spite of a severe scalp-wound, Aubrey felt fit to get up, and did so.

As the rebels were ill-shod, and weary with much marching over bad roads in pouring rain, a halt of several days was made at Keynsham, and from the Hewlings Aubrey learnt that the attempt on Bristol had been abandoned.

He was soon sufficiently recovered to sit his horse; but, not feeling strong enough to undertake a long journey by himself, he accompanied the little army.

They marched to Bath, which they summoned to surrender, but the royal garrison laughed at them. They then made for Philip Norton, where they halted for the night; but news reached them that Lord Feversham, with the main body of the royal army, was close upon them.

Next morning the men were early astir, and, being assembled in their troops and companies, marched out to meet the expected attack. Aubrey, though weak, was eager to see what would happen, and he rode with a party of foot. Crossing some fields, they took up a position on either side of a deep lane, with fences on the top, along which lane the royal forces would have to advance.

Presently about five hundred men came in sight.

Waiting till they were well in the lane, Monmouth's men suddenly opened a galling musketry fire from both sides. The soldiers, taken by surprise,

fell into disorder for a minute, but rallying, replied to the fire. They pushed on up the lane till they reached a barricade which had been thrown across it, and from behind which a tremendous discharge was opened upon them, when they lost heart and fell into confusion.

The deadly fire being continued, in spite of the efforts of their officers, who endeavoured to make them storm the barricade, the soldiers turned tail, and, in their haste to get out of the death-trap they had entered, began to fight and struggle against those behind. The panic spread, and the men, throwing away their arms, fairly raced for their lives, leaving fully a hundred dead and wounded lying on the ground.

Loud cries of joy went up from Monmouth's men, and James's soldiers were correspondingly down-hearted. During the day shots were exchanged, Monmouth's men firing their cannon, but little or no damage was done. Feversham, who it appeared did not want to fight a pitched battle till his artillery came up, retired that evening to Bradford; and Monmouth, quitting his position, started southward, intending to reach Frome before daybreak.

Rain fell again that night in torrents, and the roads simply became quagmires.

It was a terrible journey, and the exhausted men, many of them shoeless through the almost incessant marching, some wounded, and all faint with hunger and saturated with rain, trudged wearily and gloomily on, often ankle-deep in mud and slush.

Though now and then a groan of pain would burst from a wounded man, no sound of complaint was heard.

One very pathetic incident occurred when they were still many miles from Frome.

Aubrey's attention was attracted by hearing groans and lamentations from the roadside. He dismounted to inquire what was the matter, and found a fine old man sitting beside the road, and two strapping young men, kneeling one on each side of him, holding his hands. The elder man had been wounded, but had managed to trudge along with the rest till at last, absolutely exhausted, he had sunk down, unable to move another step. The younger men, who were his sons, had assisted their father along until he had declared he could go no farther.

Just as Aubrey joined the group the old man was saying, 'Of what use to sacrifice all? The old tree must fall, the young saplings can brave the storm. The king's soldiers will follow us, and they will slay and spare not. Go, my children, and my blessing go with you. For me, my time has come, and soon I shall be with that blessed angel, your dear, dead mother.'

'Never will I leave you, father,' said the younger son; 'dear as is the cause of the Protestant religion to me, my father is dearer. I will remain with you and protect you while I have one drop of blood in my veins, and as we have never been parted in life, neither will we be in death.'

'Perhaps I can help you,' said Aubrey, overhearing the conversation.

'Alas, young sir, our father is wounded and spent. He bids us leave him, but we cannot.'

'There may be no need,' said Aubrey, his heart filled with compassion for both father and sons. 'We can lift him on to my saddle, and while one leads

the horse the other can support him in his seat till Frome is reached.'

'May the good God bless and prosper you all your days!' broke out the younger man. 'I know not who you are, sir; but so long as I live, count Miles Townley your devoted servant.'

Though the old man at first remonstrated, they lifted him into the saddle, and making another start, pushed on after the column, which had then passed them.

On the road, Aubrey learnt many facts concerning the Townleys, who kept a saddler's shop in Taunton. The father was one of those stern, unbending Puritans who had fought under Cromwell in the civil wars. His wife was long since dead, and with the exception of one daughter, who had married a Nonconformist preacher who had broken the then existing harsh laws, and who, with his wife had fled to Virginia to save his life, his two sons, Miles and Daniel, were the only relatives he had in the world.

Talking as they trudged along, they covered several miles, then Aubrey began to find that he had overrated his strength in thinking he could get into Frome on foot. He was determined, however, to lag behind and to run the risk of being cut down by Feversham's troopers rather than deprive the old man of his only chance of life. So for some time he managed to keep going, till he felt he could not drag his heavy riding-boots along any farther. For the last half-mile he had been holding by the horse's crupper, straining every nerve to keep up. One son led the horse, the other supported his father in the saddle, and all were then too tired to pay any attention to what was passing around them.

At last, utterly unable to keep up any longer, Aubrey released his hold on the crupper, and staggering to the roadside sank on the muddy bank to rest for a while.

One or two stragglers passed him at intervals, and when they had gone by, Aubrey, in spite of his unutterably miserable condition, in a few minutes fell fast asleep.

He must have lain there for a considerable time, for the sky was getting light in the east when he was aroused by some one shaking him by the shoulder. He sat up drowsily, and at sight of the man who thus disturbed him staggered to his feet and endeavoured to draw his sword, thinking one of Feversham's troopers was upon him.

'Handle not your weapon,' exclaimed a deep voice. 'I did but move you out of the way of my horse's hoofs. It is by the veriest chance he did not tread upon you, for you choose a strange resting-place.'

Aubrey stared at the speaker, whose voice sounded familiar, though he could not call to mind where he had heard it before. In the very dim light all he could see was that the man before him was tall and powerfully built. He wore a heavy riding-cloak, the collar of which being turned up concealed the lower part of his face, while his broad-brimmed hat shaded the upper. The end of the scabbard of a long and heavy broadsword projected from beneath his cloak, and his horse stood just behind him.

'I thank you for the service,' said Aubrey coldly, having taken all this in at a glance.

On hearing these words the horseman approached and peered into Aubrey's face, which the blood-stained bandage in great measure hid.

'You are wounded,' he then said in gentler tones, 'soaked with rain too, and look weary to death. This is no place for you; ere many hours the king's troops will be along here.'

'And what, think you, have I to fear from the king's troops?' asked Aubrey boldly. 'Who are you to assert that they are my enemies?'

The man in the cloak remained silent a moment, as though thinking how to reply, then he said, 'Who I am I may not at the moment say; but am I wrong in thinking the king's troops would not be welcome visitors to the friend of Lord Lovelace, to a confidant of Monmouth?'

'You know that?' cried Aubrey, again laying his hand upon his sword-hilt.

'And much more,' replied the stranger with a deprecatory gesture. 'Nay, boy, lay not hand on hilt. I am willing to help you, Mr Berkeley, if you will let me.'

'Zounds! now I remember. You are the horseman who came up with Lord Lovelace on the night of the attack upon Lady Wentworth.'

'Which is still another matter that King James might ask you awkward questions about.'

'You are right. I was in sorry plight last night, and sank to the ground exhausted, being unable to keep up with the army any longer. And now I ache in every limb as though I had been beaten with broomsticks.'

'Enough. I can help you; but tell me, where was Monmouth bound for?'

'Ere I answer, you must convince me you are a friend of his.'

'I am a truer friend to Monmouth than many of

those he has round him, and whom he admits to his intimacy. I have ridden five hundred miles to get speech with him.'

'Five hundred miles!' cried Aubrey aghast.

'As I have said; but pardon me, Master Berkeley, time is precious. You will render the duke a service by telling me at once what you know of his movements. His life—nay, the lives of thousands—may depend on his hearing what I have to say at once.'

The earnest manner in which these words were spoken convinced Aubrey, and he replied, 'He was marching on Frome last night.'

'Then I have gone out of my way. I heard he was before Bristol, and rode thither, only narrowly to escape falling into the hands of Feversham's men. Up behind me, lad; we must get into Frome as hard as my horse will carry us.'

Without more words they started, but it was between eight and nine before they reached the town.

The place was crowded; the drenched, ragged, and starved rustics had crawled in anywhere they could to find shelter, and were sunk deep in sleep.

From Buyse, who seemed the only man in authority awake, Aubrey learnt that the duke was abed, and despite all that Aubrey's companion could say, Buyse resolutely refused to have him awakened.

'At twelve o'clock,' said he, 'I shall awake der duke, who is not used to such rough vork, and must sleep. Zen I sleep, and you can see him.'

Buyse was too good a soldier to be persuaded out of what he deemed to be his duty, and besides, his contention was perfectly reasonable. Therefore,

Aubrey and his unknown companion turned away from the house where the duke lay, and sought a shelter for themselves.

This was most difficult to find, for every place was crowded; but at last they were accommodated in the workshop of a carpenter, and here they wrung the wet from their clothes, and after eating a dish of fried eggs lay down on the shavings and sank at once to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE NEWS THAT CAME FROM THE NORTH.

JUST before midday, Aubrey's companion woke him up. It was with difficulty he managed to obtain a pint of water in which to wash; as to his clothes, the mud on them was still wet, and he presented a very bedraggled appearance; moreover, he felt ill and weak, but he made an effort to pull himself together.

At a few minutes past twelve they both arrived at the duke's lodgings, and were admitted; but they had to wait some time, for Monmouth was at his toilet. When they entered the duke's room Aubrey found him looking very pale and worn, though he was warmly welcomed.

'It grieves me to see you wounded and travel-stained, Mr Berkeley,' said Monmouth; 'but, alas! war is war. I trust the day is not far distant when I shall be able to reward all my friends.'

'And if it is, we are all ready to give much more than we have yet given, even to our lives,' said Lord Grey, who was present.

'Wha talks o' deein'?' cried Ferguson, who was waiting on Monmouth. 'The Lord hath verily smiled on our arms, we ha'e smitten the Philistine heavily—yea, we ha'e broken him. In the midst o' success, wha speaks o' deein'?'

While Ferguson was running on in this strain Monmouth caught sight of Aubrey's companion. He

started violently, and said, 'News from the North has arrived.'

By the looks which passed between the duke, Grey, and Ferguson, it was clear that those words had a special meaning for them. The stranger gave the duke a stiff military salute, nodded to Lord Grey, but took no notice at all of Ferguson.

'I bring bad news,' he said shortly.

Monmouth's agitation was for a moment painful to see; but, mastering himself, he said, 'We are prepared to hear the worst, Colonel Hall.'

The colonel threw back his cloak, showing a leathern coat and breastplate beneath. From a pocket in the skirt of his coat he took a small letter.

'These are Argyll's farewell words,' he said. 'He bade me tell you to read them in private. They contain no mention of public affairs, news of which I bring by word of mouth.'

'Speak on,' said Monmouth, sinking on to a chair, and putting the letter in his pocket.

'What I have to say would be better in your private ear.'

'I have no secrets from my friends.'

'If they be friends,' replied the colonel, with a significant look at Ferguson.

The Scot began an angry tirade, but the colonel contemptuously turned his back upon him, and said to the duke, 'Argyll's attempt has failed, his army is scattered, he himself is dead, as is Rumbold. Ayloffe is a prisoner in the Tower. Hume and Cochrane are fugitives, flying from James's vengeance.'

'Man, man!' cried Monmouth, horror vibrating in his tones, while Grey and Ferguson turned pale, 'can this be true?'

'I was with the earl, and saw everything. It was the bickerings between the leaders that led to our defeat. After Argyll was captured he was taken to Edinburgh, and dragged bareheaded through the town behind the common hangman. By now, I doubt not, he has been executed. Rumbold was wounded to death when he was captured; but he had life enough left in him to enable him to be hanged, drawn, and quartered near the city cross in the High Street. Ayloffe was brought to London, so that he might be forced to name his confederates. And now Athol is ravaging Argyllshire with fire and sword, neither man, woman, nor child being safe from his blood-thirstiness.'

'Horrible, horrible!' cried Monmouth, covering his face with his hands. 'Tell me no more of that. How did you escape?'

'By luck, and by having a good horse. I crossed the Border safely, and have been able to avoid capture. But I have worse news still for you. Paralysed by Argyll's defeat, your friends will not rise in the North, Lovelace can do nothing in the Midlands, Wildman says the members of the House are terrified to death, and that all chance of success is for the present gone.'

The duke broke out into angry exclamations against Wildman. 'He has been a prime mover in this affair,' he said. 'He promised everything, and has done nothing. He has deceived me—he has deceived us all; and if ill comes of it 'twill be more his fault than anybody's.'

'Your cup of misery is not yet full, your grace. As I came through London I learnt that Parliament has voted four hundred thousand pounds to meet the

king's present necessities, that a bill of attainder was passed in one day against you, and that a reward of five thousand pounds is offered for your apprehension. As you must know, Churchill and Feversham are all round you with a large army of well-trained men, and if you wish to escape from their meshes you must act instantly.'

This was, indeed, terrible news, and, coming at a time when every one was suffering from the depression caused by the long night-march through drenching rain, had a most distressing effect upon Monmouth.

Ferguson blustered at first about the 'Lord takin' care o' His own,' and that 'Argyll must have been betrayed;' but he was evidently uneasy in his mind. Aubrey, who was watching him keenly, noted his shifty eyes and twitching lips, and could not rid himself of the idea that the spy, alarmed by the the news he had heard, was meditating how best to make his peace with James, possibly by betraying his present confederates:

Lord Grey, ever bold in council, was more hopeful, and bade the duke bear up. 'The men of the West are loyal to you,' he said, 'and Feversham is notorious all over Europe as an incapable and inefficient general. We want but to gain one victory over the royal troops for partisans from the upper classes to flock to our standards on all hands.'

Monmouth, one hand thrust in among the lace ruffles on his bosom, sat with his head buried on his chest. 'I have no faith in the venture,' he said, over and over again. 'From the first I distrusted it. I have been led into it against my better judgment, and I feel it will end badly for me.'

'There is yet time to retrieve,' said the stern

colonel. 'Disband your followers; under cover of darkness they would be able to regain their homes and in small parties could avoid James's soldiers. With your friends, get to the coast and take ship again to Holland, to wait till a more propitious moment arrives, for as sure as God sits above us this is a reign of tyranny which will be overturned by the armed hand.'

Monmouth seemed more inclined to that counsel than to Grey's, but the latter indignantly scorned the idea of retreat; and Colonel Hall, saying he had executed his mission, asked leave to retire.

Aubrey, seeing that at the moment he was not required, was also going, when Monmouth asked him to seek out Wade and send him along.

The colonel and Aubrey entered the street together.

'Mr Berkeley,' said the former, 'you heard what I said, and it is not the worst. You are mixed up with an unfortunate, though perhaps a righteous, cause. Leave it!'

Colonel Hall, as his name seemed to be, had a masterful, dictatorial manner of speaking that Aubrey did not altogether like.

Feeling that now the colonel was surpassing the limits of good-breeding, he replied, 'I am the best judge of my affairs, I think, colonel.'

'Pooh! you are young and romantic, you have been led into this enterprise, and from some foolish idea of duty remain. But I can see at the end of the business the block, the gallows, and the quartering-bench. Judging by the signs I have seen, if this mad attempt is continued, such things will happen in this west country as will make the hair of those who only hear of the horrors stand on end.'

In spite of himself, Aubrey shuddered. 'But,' he said, 'you are engaged in the attempt.'

'I was, but sickened by the bickerings and folly of those who led, or by the weakness of the fools who commanded, I have withdrawn, and seek now my own safety. Come with me and I can assure your escape.'

'A nice return for whatever kindness I have received from the duke,' sneered Aubrey.

'If the duke is wise he will take my advice and fly. And let me warn you to beware of Ferguson; he is an arrant knave who runs with the hare and follows with the hounds. He mixes up in these affairs more from vanity than any other reason, and he cares but little on which side he acts so that he can pose as a leader.'

'I have private reasons for both disliking and distrusting Ferguson?'

'Is that so? Then be advised by me and leave to their fates him and those whom his ridiculous and pedantic ranting mislead. Come you with me.'

'I thank you; but I remained by the duke when success seemed to smile upon him, and I will not leave him at the first breath of misfortune. This is where Wade is staying. I am afraid I must wish you good-day.'

'As you will,' replied the colonel, and without another word he strode off towards the carpenter's, where he and Aubrey had been accommodated.*

In the afternoon of the same day the duke called a meeting of all the leaders of the revolt. The facts were put before them and their opinions were asked. Monmouth was low and dispirited, and was in favour

* Note C, 'The Rising in the North,' page 318.

of disbanding his followers and returning to Holland. Some agreed with him, but Lord Grey made a brilliant harangue and succeeded in arousing their martial feelings again. Buyse and Wade siding with him, it was decided to persevere in the attempt. More cheering news came to hand that evening to the effect that the rustics of the marches near Axbridge had risen, and arming themselves with any weapons they could lay hands on, were assembling in thousands at Bridgwater.

On learning this, it was agreed to march thither and effect a junction with them. Next day the army started, and by night reached Wells. Just before they arrived there, Aubrey was riding along, revolving many things in his mind, when the duke sent for him, and with his charming smile asked him if he would carry a letter to a gentleman who lived about two miles to the west of Wells.

Aubrey at once consented, and, spurring off, executed his commission. But the gentleman to whom he had delivered his letter would not let him go till he had eaten and drunk, so that it was late ere he set out on his return journey. The night was dark and the way heavy, and Aubrey had not got very far when he thought he heard a whistle twice repeated just ahead of him. He at once reined in and listened intently, but heard nothing further. He was going on, when from the thicket just beside him he heard a cry as of a man in pain.

‘Help, help, here, to me! I am beset.’

In an instant Aubrey’s sword was in his hand and he endeavoured to force his horse through the thick hedge, but, failing in this, he dismounted and burst through, finding himself in a sort of covert.

'Help, help, here!' again cried the voice, and Aubrey ran forward in its direction, when some one sprang from the shadow of the trees, something black flew out and fell completely over his head and shoulders, and in a moment he was struggling to free himself from a cloak or similar garment which was being tightly twisted round his head, while his wrists were seized in a firm grip.

A voice which sounded familiar bade him be still, that no harm was intended towards him, and that it was useless struggling.

For all that, Aubrey did struggle, but his right arm was bent back and tied behind him, he was lifted on to his saddle, his head still enveloped in the cloak, though it was loosened for him to breathe, and he was trotted off for several miles, whither, he knew not.

At times his conductors spoke, and it seemed as though he occasionally heard a laugh, but nothing that could reveal the identity of the speakers passed.

After riding for more than an hour they halted. Aubrey was dismounted, led inside a house, and up some stairs. His arm was then freed and his head uncovered, when he found himself in a well-furnished room, in which was a bed. He tried the door, but found it had been locked behind him; the window was also fastened and had bars outside. Clearly, then, there was no chance of escape; so, tired out, he sank upon the bed, and, in spite of his anxiety, in two minutes was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW AUBREY'S CAPTIVITY WAS MORE PERPLEXING THAN UNPLEASANT.

WHEN Aubrey awoke next morning, the sun was shining brightly through the window of his room, which he saw was very comfortably furnished.

Rising from the bed, he found the door was still locked, and the window being barred, he was, indeed, a prisoner. Pondering who could have effected his capture, and for what purpose, he crossed to the window, which he found looked down upon a very well-kept garden. Seating himself so that he could look out, Aubrey tried to find a reason for his detention. Was he a prisoner of the king? No, there were no signs of soldiers about; the place resembled a private house. Was it Ferguson's doing? A blow on the head with a bludgeon was more likely what he might expect from the spy. Was it Jermyn? How could Jermyn possibly know where he was; and, besides, a stab in the dark or a shot from behind a hedge would suit that gentleman's purpose better.

After a time, tiring of trying to guess who had captured him, or for what reason, Aubrey got again upon his feet and examined the room. He then noticed that up in the right-hand corner, by the bed, was a large cupboard. He opened the door and looked in; two cloaks hung on pegs. He reached up to unhang one, to see if by it he could gain any

clue to the identity of his captor, but the loop by which it was suspended caught on the peg, and a sharp tug was the result.

To Aubrey's great surprise, the back of the cupboard seemed to move; excitedly, he pulled harder, when the whole back turned on a pivot, and a narrow staircase was disclosed to view. Without a moment's hesitation he descended a few steps till he came to a wall or door. Feeling about, his hand encountered a handle, which he turned, when another door opened, and he found himself in a parlour which was presumably immediately below the room he had slept in. The window, which of course looked out upon the garden, was wide open.

Without waiting to notice anything about the room, except that it was empty, Aubrey crossed to the window and stepped out into the garden, down which he rapidly went. Beyond the trees which grew at the end of the garden was a labyrinth planted with tall but well-cropped hedges, and having charming beds full of rich blossoms which seemed to hide in the nooks and corners between the hedges. Entering this labyrinth and turning a corner suddenly, Aubrey came upon a lad who, engaged in plucking flowers, was singing in a low voice.

For a moment both of them stared at one another, and it would have been hard to say which was the more surprised. Then the lad, who looked about sixteen, turned a fiery red, and, dropping the flowers he had gathered, stammered, 'You—you here? How on earth did you—did you—get out?'

'Through the window,' replied Aubrey sternly; 'and now, perhaps, you wouldn't mind telling me

whose house this is, and why I have been brought here ?'

'I—I don't—I can't tell you,' stammered the boy.

Aubrey looked keenly at the speaker. He was rather stout, but possessed a pleasing countenance, with clean-cut features and a complexion many a Court beauty would have given a year of her life to possess. He was dressed in dark blue, with a deep lace collar, wore high riding-boots made of the very finest Spanish leather, and, contrary to the fashion for one so young, a full wig of almost black hair.

Aubrey took all this in while he was speaking. 'Boy,' he said, 'it is no good your prevaricating; I should be loath to hurt you, but I shall be forced to compel you to answer my questions, and truthfully, for I must get away from this place as quickly as possible.'

The boy drew himself up, and with flashing eyes cried, 'You dare not lay hands on me, you—you brute.'

Aubrey laughed. 'Hoity-toity, I see you have a dagger in your belt, while I am unarmed. 'Twill equalise the odds.'

The boy bared his dagger. 'Beware how you anger me then,' he said.

'Tell me at once why I am kept here?' asked Aubrey, getting impatient. 'I have neither the time nor the fancy for fooling.'

'You are kept here because it is for your good. You will be kindly treated, and in a few days released; but do not attempt to escape, as it will but end in disaster for you.'

'Indeed!' said Aubrey. 'That we shall see;' and

he tried to pass the boy, who, however, seized him by the sleeve.

'Listen, listen!' he cried in warning tones; 'there are those watching you who will treat you with scant ceremony if you disobey them. Return at once to your room.'

'That I will not; and unhand me, or I shall have to be rough with you.'

At that instant hasty footsteps sounded behind him, and, turning, Aubrey beheld two men, accompanied by a big black mastiff dog. The foremost figure was tall and spare, with closely cropped gray hair and long, mournful features, his brown clothing being cut in strict puritanical fashion. Behind him was a much younger man, whose features showed the same determination as the elder man's, but without the intelligence.

'How got you here?' demanded the first man sternly.—'Did you let him out?' he asked, turning to the boy.

'I did not,' he answered.

'I got out myself, and demand to be instantly liberated,' said Aubrey haughtily. 'By what right do you detain me?'

'Through no love for you,' said the old man dryly. 'I am ordered to keep you, therefore you stay.'

'I will not stay.'

'Might is on my side. There is myself, Nehemiah Hulks, there is Josiah here, two other young men as strong as he, and David the dog. You are unarmed; we all carry carnal weapons and are somewhat versed in the use of them. You will do well to return to your room.'

'You shall answer to the king for this conduct.'

Nehemiah Hulks indulged in his nearest approach to a smile. 'I have heard that James Stuart is no great friend of yours,' he said; 'but will you go back to your room peaceably, or shall I call my other men?'

Another great fellow appeared at that moment at the end of the walk, and Aubrey saw that all idea of resistance at that particular moment was futile. 'I yield to numbers,' he said indignantly; and, preceded by Nehemiah Hulks, he went back to his room.

'If you will pass me your "word of honour," as your gallants' jargon has it,' said Hulks, 'though I doubt much whether there is any honour amongst the whole crew of ye—if you will pass your word of honour not to attempt to escape, I will make you free of the house and garden.'

'I will make no such promise, and I will trouble you to get out of the room.'

'Very well,' exclaimed Nehemiah calmly, 'then you must e'en remain a close prisoner, and I must see to it that you do not escape, which, I doubt not, I shall accomplish, having in my day had charge of many who were accounted among the mighty in the land, though, in truth, they were but sorry knaves. I will send you some books anon, pious works that will do you much good if you will but read them humbly and with a contrite heart.'

'Get out,' said Aubrey angrily.

'Ha,' exclaimed Nehemiah, spying the open cupboard door, 'now I see how you escaped; careless to leave it thus.' He pulled to the door, which shut with a snap, then left the room, turning the key in the lock behind him.

When he had gone, Aubrey felt more than ever puzzled at his confinement. What cause on earth could such a stern-faced old Puritan as Hulks have for detaining him he could not guess.

Good food in plenty was given to him, also a supply of books, amongst which were Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, and others of a similar nature.

During the day Aubrey had plenty of leisure in which to assure himself that all idea of escape was out of the question. The house was well and strongly built; the secret way by which he had gone out in the morning certainly opened from the other side, and had been left undone by mistake, perhaps by some one who had crept in to observe him while he slept or to rifle his pockets for papers. A search through his pockets showed him, however, that nothing had been touched. So the time passed until the evening, when the snapping of a spring sounded, and before Aubrey could rise from his seat by the window, the boy he had seen in the garden that morning entered the room through the secret way. For a moment he stood hesitatingly in the middle of the room, then he said civilly, 'Would you like me to come and talk to you? I thought you might be dull.'

'In all conscience I am dull enough,' replied Aubrey indifferently. 'I could talk to a parrot to kill time.'

'I'm sorry,' said the boy, seating himself on a chair behind Aubrey, 'that I was rude to you this morning; it would have served me right if you had thrashed me.'

Aubrey stared at the lad. 'You, at least, seem to have some sense of decency,' he said. 'Tis indeed

monstrous t. shut a man up like a bear in a cage. Tell me, my good boy, is Nehemiah Hulks your father ?'

'No.'

'Uncle ?'

'No relation.'

'Then what may you be doing here, if I may make bold to ask ? Your voice sounds familiar, and you somewhat resemble some one I have seen, though whom I cannot remember. You are certainly very different from the people who surround you.'

'They are very good people.'

'Doubtless ; so some thought the people who executed Charles the First ; but you haven't answered my question.' In spite of that, though, and many other questions that Aubrey asked, he did not get direct answers ; in fact, he soon found out that the boy was a much greater master of the art of questioning than he was himself, and that he answered only those questions which suited him.

He imparted the fact that his name was Lancelot, that his father was from home on urgent business, and that he was staying with Nehemiah Hulks till his father should come for him. That was all he would say about himself ; but he asked Aubrey all sorts of questions, and Aubrey, having nothing better to do, chattered on, Lancelot appearing never to tire of listening. When Aubrey's supper was brought, Lancelot retired, saying he would come again on the morrow.

Next morning Lancelot came in, accompanied by Mistress Hulks, a stout, comfortable-looking dame, very much under the domination of the sour-faced Nehemiah, but withal, possessing a good, kind,

motherly heart. The man who brought Aubrey's meals was there too, and Dame Hulks asked Aubrey if the food was as he liked it, and if there was anything else she could do for him.

Aubrey told her the only thing he wanted was his liberty.

'Deary me, if it was left to me you should be free this instant; but 'tis some Parliament business, I hear. However, here is Lance hath brought his lute, on which he is a sweet performer, and asks leave to sing and play to you.'

'Nay, 'twas your own proposal,' said Lance hotly.

'So it was,' agreed Mistress Hulks, hastily backing out, 'and I hope you 'll soon be free, sweet sir.'

Lancelot still wore his riding-boots, and had on, in addition, a short cape.

'You always seem dressed as for a journey,' said Aubrey.

'In truth I am somewhat like you in that respect,' replied the lad. 'My wardrobe is limited, and I know not any hour but my father may come for me, so I am always ready.'

Presently he tuned his lute, and sang and played so sweetly that Aubrey, who was very fond of music, listened delightedly.

The morning passed pleasantly, and so did several days, Aubrey taking a great liking to Lancelot, who was a lively companion, and told him much of his history.

Aubrey once said to him that to sing and play the lute was a very nice accomplishment, but that it was more important for a young man to ride and fence well, and pressed the boy to procure a pair of foils, so that they could have some practice.

'I care not for fencing,' said Lancelot; 'tell me more of your adventures. Tell me of Lady Wentworth.'

'What know you of her?' cried Aubrey in great astonishment.

'Did you not tell me about her yourself? Methought you said you were in love with her.'

'I, boy! You must be mad!'

'Yet you wear her ring on your finger.'

'True, I do.'

'Then you must love her.'

'Bah! what know you of love; you are a most forward boy, and talk of things far beyond your years.'

'I'll warrant I know more of love than you do.'

'Then more shame for you. That comes of twanging lutes and chanting love ditties. Were I your father I would have you differently trained.'

'Fie, Aubrey Berkeley, for all your long face I'd vow you have a tress of some fair lady's hair hanging in a bag round your neck.'

'Boy,' cried Aubrey angrily, 'if you were more a man I'd box your ears,' and taking hold of his arms he shook Lance soundly.

To his surprise the boy cried out as though in pain, and, snatching one hand free, gave Aubrey a sounding smack on the face.

Aubrey went scarlet, but he mastered himself. 'You saucy coxcomb!' he cried, 'surely consorting overmuch with your elders has addled your pate. You are the most arrant jackanapes I have ever known. I would beat you soundly but that I fear to break your bones.'

'Beast,' cried Lance, stamping his foot. 'If I am a coxcomb, you are a—a—great strong bully,' and so saying he rushed out of the room. As he went Aubrey noticed in the passage without the figure of Josiah on guard there.

During that day Aubrey saw the boy no more. The next day was Sunday, and after Aubrey had disposed of his breakfast Lance entered through the secret door. All traces of anger had disappeared from his face, and he shook Aubrey's hand. 'I have heard from my father,' he said, 'and I leave here perhaps to-day. I come to say good-bye.'

'Indeed, Lance, I shall be sorry to lose you, for though you are a malapert lad, something there is about you that I like. My captivity will be all the duller without you.'

'I am glad to hear you say so. I thought you must hate me for an impudent tease.'

'I bear no malice, lad; in truth, I love you as a younger brother, or sometimes as an elder, for your head is older than your body. If ever more peaceful days come to this unhappy England I shall hope to see more of you.'

'Then good-bye,' said Lancelot hastily. 'I want none to know I have seen you to-day.' And with a hurried handshake he disappeared through the secret door.

When he was gone, Aubrey sat down with a sigh at the open window, looking out upon the fair garden. The bells of a neighbouring church were calling the congregation to worship.

Some time later a chorus of voices, rather badly out of tune, singing a psalm, sounded from another part of the house, and Aubrey guessed Nehemiah

was conducting a service after the Puritan fashion, for the first Act of Indulgence, giving sectarians leave to hold public services, had not yet been issued by James.

Tired at last of sitting, Aubrey began to walk up and down the room, when, to his joy, in passing the cupboard he noticed the secret door was again unfastened. Lance, in his hurry, had either forgotten to close it, or had purposely left it open—Aubrey did not wait to think which it was. Here was a chance of escape, and, donning hat and cloak, he quickly passed through.

He shut the secret door behind him, and after listening a moment, and hearing no sound from within but the singing, he gently turned the handle and entered the room beneath. It was empty, so he quickly crossed to the window, which he opened, slipped into the garden, and made for the trees at the end of it. He set his teeth hard, determined not to give up this time without a struggle.

He gained the labyrinth and approached the garden wall. It was high and topped with keen spikes. This, however, did not deter him. He looked about till he found a tree growing close to the wall; this he climbed, and by crawling along a branch succeeded in gaining the top of the wall. Standing with one foot on each side of the triple row of spikes, he saw it was a good sixteen feet to the ground on the other side. He undid the sash he wore round his waist, tied one end to the spikes, then very gingerly kneeling on the outer side of the wall, and holding on by the spikes with both hands, he lowered himself till his hands held the top of the wall, when, seizing the sash, he was enabled to

get within about five feet of the ground. He dropped and alighted in safety, then, taking to his heels, he set off at full speed towards a wood he saw in front of him, without in the least knowing in what direction he was running.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE FIGHT AT SEDGEMOOR.

HAVING gained the wood, Aubrey slackened his pace and looked around him. All was quiet, and his escape had evidently not been discovered. He could now see that the house in which he had been confined was of fair size, and was completely surrounded by a high wall. While he had been there his wound had completely healed, and he felt perfectly well again, so at a good pace he strode off through the wood, reached the highroad, and guiding himself by the sun, struck south and walked for a good two hours till a river barred his farther progress. After a little time he espied a boy in a boat pulling lazily downstream; the offer of a groat induced this lad to row him across. From him Aubrey learnt that the river was called the Axe, and that they were close to Weare, that they were about ten miles from Wells, and about sixteen from Bridgwater, the road to the latter place making a considerable sweep in its course. Aubrey also learnt that 'King Monmouth' was said to be at Bridgwater, whence he was going to London, there to be crowned.

This news decided Aubrey to head for Bridgwater, seek the Hewlings, and if possible obtain the loan of a horse to take him quickly away from the west country, when at his leisure he might decide upon his future movements.

After obtaining some food at a cottage, he resumed his journey and tramped considerably over twenty

miles, going somewhat out of his way, through, from policy, not caring to ask his way. The weather was exceedingly hot, and as the sun was setting Aubrey cast himself on the grass just inside the shadow of a wood, to rest a little, when, without having any intention of so doing, he fell fast asleep.

Awaking after the moon had risen, he jumped up in haste, feeling much refreshed by his sleep. He started off again, but he had gone so far out of his road that he missed Bridgwater altogether, and got out on to the marshes beyond. Here he found himself in a dense fog that prevented him from seeing twenty paces ahead; and, hearing a clock somewhere in the distance strike twelve, he determined to remain where he was till daylight should appear, and then make for Bridgwater. Without waiting to choose a spot, he cast himself on the ground and again fell asleep.

He was not destined to sleep for long, however. In less than an hour he was awakened by the sound of trampling feet and hoofs, and the rumble of wheels.

He started up; the sounds grew rapidly louder till, through the mist, he saw the shadowy forms of a long line of horsemen. By the diversity of their appearance it was clear that they were not regular cavalry, and the conviction began to grow upon Aubrey that Monmouth's men were upon him. Avoiding the horsemen, Aubrey saw that on their flank were a number of footmen; and one great giant catching sight of him cried out, 'Hallo, who are you, gi'e the word?'

'I am a friend,' replied Aubrey; 'whose men are you?'

'King Monmouth's men are we, but we know not

whose man thou beest ; here, lad, come and gi'e an account o' thyself, and make no noise, or I'll dash out thy brains.'

The fellow seized Aubrey, who, without any show of resistance, accompanied him down the ranks to his officer, who turned out to be Wade the lawyer. In a few words Aubrey explained what had happened to him.

'You are welcome back,' said Wade, 'we want every man this night. The royal army is encamped on the moor, and that dolt of a Feversham is keeping no discipline. Hardly any sentries are set, and our spies report that the soldiers have been drinking and dicing, and I know not what. We are going to take them by surprise, and hope to rout them utterly.'

'Have you good guides ?' asked Aubrey excitedly, his blood all a-tingle at the thought of a fight.

'We have a man to whom, 'tis said, every inch of the ground is known.'

They spoke only in whispers as they marched along in the dense fog, and presently a young officer approached them to say that they were close to the first of the great ditches, or 'rhines' as they are called in that part of the country, and that the guide had found the causeway by which they had to cross.

In the new-comer Aubrey recognised William Hewling, and they heartily shook hands.

'We have Feversham in a trap,' said Hewling in an animated whisper ; 'we shall cut him to pieces. But tell me, where have you been, and what has happened to you ? We had given you up for dead or captured.'

Aubrey related what had happened to him, and then inquired after Benjamin Hewling.

'Poor Ben, he was sent off to bring in some recruits and has not yet returned; if we fight this battle without him he will break his heart about it. He has been looking forward to the fight for a week past.'

By that time they had arrived at the Black Ditch or Rhine, which was passed in safety, when they came to the second, called Langmoor Rhine.

The greatest caution was observed, for ahead they could see the watchfires of the royal army. Some of the men behind, however, missed the way, and made a muddle of crossing the Langmoor Rhine, which occasioned a little confusion, in the middle of which a pistol went off with a loud report. During the excitement which ensued, some of the vedettes of the royal army fired their carbines.

A messenger came spurring up to Wade from Monmouth. 'Hurry on your men, and attack at once!' he said. 'Lord Grey, with the cavalry, is pushing on ahead.'

Quickening their pace, they went forward, hearing as they went the drums and trumpets of Feversham's men beating and sounding to arms.

Wade's men came up with the cavalry, who were in great confusion.

'What is wrong?' asked Wade.

'Another deep ditch is in front of us, the biggest of all,' replied a trooper; 'we cannot pass it, and the royal army is just the other side of it.'

'I know, 'tis the Bussex Rhine,' said a man in the ranks.

'Halt, there! For whom are you?' cried a voice with startling clearness from across the wide, muddy ditch.

'For the king!' answered a dozen voices round Aubrey.

'For which king?'

'King Monmouth, and God with us,' came in a shout.

Instantly there rang out a crashing volley of musketry, which emptied many a saddle, and sent Grey's troopers flying in all directions.

'The cowards, they fly again!' cried Will Hewling.

Another volley followed, the leaden balls tearing through the close ranks of Wade's men.

'On your knees, *Kinders!*' sang out Buyse, who came running up. 'On your knees, and give fire!'

The brave peasants came crowding up to the edge of the rhine, and kneeling, opened fire, when for half-an-hour such a roar of musketry was kept up from both sides that it positively deafened Aubrey, who was taking no part in the fight.

Presently the men began to cry out for more ammunition, but none could be obtained, a rumour that the ammunition wagons had driven off the field being passed from mouth to mouth. But the stubborn courage of the hardy peasants was roused, and they determined to die where they stood rather than retreat. The sight of the Duke of Monmouth on foot, with a pike in his hand, encouraged them to a mad enthusiasm, and they gave a mighty shout; but all the advantage of a night attack had been lost. Churchill had brought the royal cavalry across the rhine, and from the right the Life Guards and from the left the Horse Guards came charging down on the devoted countrymen. The rebels, however, faced the superbly mounted troops like old soldiers; and with clubbed muskets and their scythe-

topped poles they stood firm, as the cavalry, at a gallop that made the very ground tremble beneath their hoofs, thundered down upon them.

Marmouth's men cried piteously for ammunition, but the treacherous drivers had fled, and were by that time again in Bridgwater.

Day was realising, and now the king's artillery came up, and cannon balls began to plough long, bloody furrows in the ranks of the peasantry. The leaders were slain, the standard was lost, and Marmouth, with his personal staff, fled from the field.

During the day the king's musketeers poured in on the peasants a deadly fire, the artillery played on them, and the cavalry rode through and through them till a thick and dead lay upon the ensanguined field. It became apparent to every one that the day was lost; the ranks being broken, the royal cavalry cut the men down without mercy; they were driven back towards Bridgwater, and the retreat in a few moments became an utter rout.

Aubrey and Will Hewling had been together during the fight, and were carried away with the rest towards Bridgwater. Presently they became separated, Aubrey finding himself with Daniel Townley and his father, who was then sufficiently recovered to handle a pike.

No mercy was being given to those who threw down their arms. The relentless troopers smote and spared not, and the only chance for the rebels lay in flight.

Aubrey and his companions found themselves on the extreme edge of the fight, and paused for a moment to look round.

Everywhere the peasants were flying or stubbornly

fighting till they fell. They were not more than a mile from Bridgwater when Aubrey saw riding towards him two horsemen, one leading a spare horse. Looking at them again, he noticed to his infinite surprise that they were Nehemiah Hulks and the boy Lance. He was himself recognised, and Lance cried in tones of terror, 'Quick, quick, Aubrey; we have your horse, mount and fly with us.'

At that moment a party of the Blues came charging down upon them, and they were surrounded by madly prancing black steeds, whose riders cut and slashed with their heavy broadswords.

Old Townley went down under a terrible cut that cleft his head almost in two, but he was avenged on the instant, for Aubrey, using a sword he had picked up on the field, with an upward thrust caught the soldier under the armpit, just above his cuirass, and with a shriek he dropped his sword. While he reeled in the saddle Daniel Townley gave him a blow with his scythe which almost severed his head from his body. He was in turn, though, struck down and trampled under the horses' hoofs. Another trooper, wheeling round, drew a pistol, and, presenting it almost point blank at Aubrey, pulled the trigger. The ball whizzed by, laying Aubrey's left cheek open, while the flash and report so startled Nehemiah Hulks's already terrified horse that, after rearing so as almost to unseat his rider, he got the bit between his teeth and started off at a wild gallop.

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and with loud cries closed
former vaulted

Daniel Townley

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or

apt the troopers at

bay, while they waited for an opening to dash in and cut the intrepid rebel down.

The horse which Lance held was tugging and pulling at its bridle, and one of the soldiers, seeing this, gave it a cut on the flanks, when the animal, with a cry of pain, gave a wrench that pulled Lance out of the saddle, then, being free, it dashed away, creating some confusion amongst the troopers as it did so.

A soldier seized Lance by the collar, crying, 'Here is a young cockerel that mustn't be allowed to ripen into an old rebel; he'll look well at the end of a rope.'

'Save me! save me!' cried Lance, trying to tear himself away.

The trooper made a cut at the boy, but Aubrey spurred forward and parried the blow. Lance was, however, knocked down by the horses, and got a bad kick on the head.

Nehemiah Hulks, who had again got his horse under control, came galloping back, his eyes ablaze with the old republican spirit as he struck a trooper from his saddle with a blow that needed no repeating.

'Let us smite the Philistines!' he cried. He attacked the other troopers with such fury that Aubrey was enabled to slip from his saddle, lift the limp and inanimate form of Lance on to his shoulder, and with some difficulty mount again, his trained horse standing quite still the while. Then with a last cry of 'For Monmouth and God with us,' he cut his way through the troopers, and galloped off, Nehemiah Hulks following. Two persistent soldiers started in pursuit; but Nehemiah Hulks turned in

his saddle, and coolly levelling a pistol fired and brought one to the ground, when the other drew rein and gave up the chase.

Nehemiah then galloped up alongside Aubrey, and asked, 'Is Lance dead or only stunned?'

'I know not,' replied Aubrey.

'Then on, man, till we are out of danger and can tend his hurts.'

The ground flew under their horses' hoofs, and giving Bridgwater a wide berth they struck out almost due east. It was just four o'clock, and the morning was fine, but the riders took no heed of that. Galloping mile after mile, they passed Edington and Shapwick, and drew rein at last on the banks of the river Axe, which on the previous morning Aubrey had been rowed across. Here he almost fell from his saddle with exhaustion, caused partly by fatigue and partly by loss of blood, for his wound had bled freely.

Nehemiah dashed water in his face and then turned his attention to Lance, who, though breathing, was still insensible. A purple mark on his forehead showed where a horse had kicked him, and it was doubtful whether the blow would not be fatal.

After plunging his head and neck in the cold stream and tying a handkerchief round his jaws, Aubrey felt better, and again mounting, they went along the stream to a ford, Nehemiah bearing Lance in front of him. Having forded the stream, they went on again by short cuts and lanes till at length Nehemiah's house appeared before them.

They were soon inside the gate, and Dame Hulks came running out, wringing her hands and crying. At the sight of the blood which was spattered over

Lancelot's head and clothing she gave a scream of affright.

'The poor lamb, dead, dead !' she moaned.

'Peace, woman,' said Nehemiah sternly. 'The blood is the young gallant's ; but Lance hath received a grievous hurt. Get him to bed at once while I go for good Master Prynne the surgeon ; and for you, Master Berkeley, eat and rest. You are safe here ; you have fought this day well for the cause, but the time is not yet.'

'Before I partake of your hospitality, tell me, am I free to depart when I like ?'

'Free as the air ; there is no longer cause to keep you. Friends would have prevented you from drawing sword in Monmouth's ill-fated cause ; it is now too late. You had best look to yourself, for there will be a searching and harrying and hanging after this such as the west country has never seen, unless James has much altered since he was Governor of Scot^lnd.'

Aubrey would have helped to carry poor Lance to his room, but Nehemiah said he could manage very well without any assistance. 'I and my wife can do all that is required,' he said ; 'she is skilled in leechcraft, and I am fetching a surgeon who is much renowned in these parts.'

Seeing neither his help nor his presence was required, Aubrey set about getting a meal, after which he fell back in his chair and dropped off to sleep, nor did he awake till the sun was setting.

He was alone in the room, and stretching, he yawned and stood up. The recollections of the morning came crowding thickly upon him.

His heart bled for the poor devoted peasants who

had fallen in their hundreds for Monmouth, their idol. And where was he? A fugitive, flying for his life, or a captive in his uncle's power? Wade, Buysse, Goodenough, the Hewlings, Ferguson, where were they all? There was no answering these questions, and Aubrey turned his thoughts to his own condition.

Presently Nehemiah entered the room, when Aubrey immediately asked about Lance.

'His wound is serious, but he lives,' replied Nehemiah, 'for the rest, all is in the Lord's hands. And how do you feel?'

'Another man from what I was this morning.'

'It is well, for from what I can gather, grievous times are in store for those who fought this day. If you remain here we must hide you, for the whole countryside is being searched.'

'Is that so? Then I will not stop here to endanger your safety.'

If Aubrey had expected Nehemiah to press him to stay, he was disappointed. In fact, the old Puritan seemed as anxious now to get rid of Aubrey as before he had been to keep him. He did, indeed, offer him a disguise, and even a guide to take him to the seacoast, for he strongly persuaded Aubrey to flee the country.

'You had best make for Weymouth or Poole,' he said, 'for I hear king's men are on the lookout at Bristol, and that none will escape that way. From the coast of Dorset it will be easier to get some smuggling craft to land you in Holland.'

Aubrey listened to what Nehemiah had to say; then, while he went to indulge in a good wash, his host said he would saddle and bridle his horse.

Having finished his preparations, Aubrey returned

to the room, and was buckling on his sword, which had been returned to him, when Dame Hulks came bustling in, her kind old face wearing a troubled look.

'Well met, mistress,' said Aubrey. 'I am glad of this opportunity of asking how your patient is before I go, and, if I can, I should like to see him.'

'The Lord be praised, good Master Berkeley, she is better, but she is grievous hurt. She has come to her senses a bit, but in her delirium she keeps talking of you, and of her father, and'——

'She?' said Aubrey in amaze. 'I speak of Lance.'

'Goody me, what have I done; but there, now you know. Lance is no boy, but the sweetest, dearest lady in the world.'

'A woman!' cried Aubrey, still more astonished. 'Then who is she, tell me;' but Dame Hulks covered her head in her apron and sobbed aloud, as a heavy footfall announced the return of Nehemiah, who glanced sternly from one to the other.

'Your horse is ready, friend,' he said.

Aubrey, still in wonder, paused a moment; then slipping Lady Wentworth's ring from his finger, he said, 'Mistress Hulks, give Lancelot this from me, and tell him that I shall think of him in my wanderings and of all that he has said to me. Mind and say "all," and thank him for his many kindnesses to me.'

A few minutes later he was mounted; and leaving Nehemiah's house behind him, he headed away towards the south coast, whither he was told lay his only chance of safety.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW AUBREY DONNED THE KING'S UNIFORM.

AS Aubrey turned his back on the house that had been to him both a prison and a haven of refuge, his mind was in a state of excitement.

The discovery that Lance was a woman was the last in a series of startling events. Who was she? why had she adopted that disguise? and why had she interested herself in his welfare?

Long before he had settled these questions he had reached a small bridge, by which he crossed the river Axe, and then jogged on till his horse, shying at some object lying in the roadway, almost unseated him. Glancing down, Aubrey saw it was the dead body of a man, a labourer, judging by his dress.

He knew he must be getting near the field of battle, nearer, in fact, than was wise, and he pulled up to consider just where he was.

The tramp of horses and the voices of men fell upon his ear. Leaving the road, he crossed a bit of damp earth and reached a belt of trees, under the shadow of which he dismounted, and tying his handkerchief round his horse's muzzle to prevent him from neighing, he waited till, in the moonlight, he saw about a dozen mounted forms coming down the road. It was too dark to distinguish colours; but by their outline Aubrey could see that the riders were soldiers, and as they came nearer, amongst them appeared several roughly clad figures, their arms tied behind them and ropes round their necks, who were

being driven along with blows and curses, as though they were cattle.

This sight reminded Aubrey of his own danger; and when the poor wretches and their brutal captors had passed he went farther from the road towards a bit of rising ground on which stood an old mill. After some careful manœuvring he satisfied himself that this was empty, and ascending it he looked about him. He soon made the startling discovery that all around, before, and behind him, watchfires, evidently made by small patrols, were burning, and he knew well that round those watchfires soldiers would be seated. Patrols would probably be on all the roads, to fall into whose hands would mean disaster. He, therefore, decided to stay where he was till day broke, which could not be very long.

After having secured his horse, he returned to the mill, where he dozed fitfully until the dawn, when he again looked about him. From the top of the mill, where he had climbed, he could at first see nothing moving in the country round him. He was about to descend when he observed several troopers, the sun flashing on their cuirasses, riding down the road.

Suddenly one pulled up, and the flash of a pistol was quickly followed by a report. Two men, young and agile, bounded out, apparently from the ditch in which they had been hiding. In an instant the troopers had leapt their horses over the low hedge and were galloping after the fugitives. These were, however, sturdy fellows, and, moreover, running for their lives. The riders gained on them but slowly, though still surely. A dragoon worked round to the left of one runner, drew his sword, and standing in the stirrups cut down from his left shoulder with all

his force. The poor hunted wretch fell, his limbs twitching in agony. The other was running straight towards the mill, and Aubrey, setting his teeth, made up his mind to defend him, when, the runner's foot slipping, he fell, and in an instant was seized by a trooper who had flung himself from his horse. The man, puffing and panting, could offer no resistance, and was dragged back towards the body of his late companion. Aubrey could see he was being questioned, and judging from the angry looks the soldiers exchanged, and from their loud voices, his answers did not seem to please them. Presently he was dragged back to the highroad, a rope flung up over the branch of a tree, a noose fastened round his neck, and he was hoisted up, the soldiers sitting round on their horses. The horrible twitching limbs seemed to have a fascination for Aubrey, who could not for a moment take his eyes from the dreadful scene.

Suddenly he turned away, and, burying his face in his hands, cried, 'May the Lord forgive those who have brought all this suffering upon these poor misguided peasants!'

When next he looked round the limbs of the man were still, and the soldiers had ridden on again.

It was high time he began to think of his own safety. He waited till the soldiers had got well out of sight, then he descended to the ground. He was just about to lead his horse forth when his ear again caught the sound of trampling hoofs, and a second body of horse came trotting by. As they passed the poor swinging corpse of the peasant, one trooper wantonly fired his pistol at it, an act which filled Aubrey with such a loathing that he was consumed

with a mad desire to get away from the west country where such terrible things were happening.

Alas! the horrors were but just commencing.

Aubrey saw that he would have to exercise the greatest caution, as the place seemed swarming with soldiers, and any moment a party might ride up to the old mill.

After some time had elapsed he ventured forth, and, leading his horse, reached a lane which lay low between high hedges. He proceeded for some distance, but had several alarms. He was once challenged by a sergeant in command of a party of Dumbarton's regiment of foot, and escaped only by putting spurs to his horse and galloping for his life.

Some distance east of Weston Zoyland, and on the rising ground between that and Buttleigh, Aubrey came across a spot where, on the preceding morning, the Life Guards had overtaken a small group who had fled from the battlefield. There were several dead bodies still lying on the ground, among them being two soldiers—the burying-parties not having yet got as far as that.

Passing them, Aubrey looked curiously at the soldiers, and paused to examine more closely the face of one who lay extended on his back, a calm look on his white face, upon which the dew yet lay.

It was the face of the recruit Fairholt. Alas! poor fellow, his soldiering days had been short. He was in complete uniform, having probably been supplied from the wardrobe of one of those who had fallen at Keynsham. The dead man's ribbons were green, and his carbine belt was also covered with green velvet and gold lace. Aubrey gazed at the trappings of his horse, for Nehemiah Hulks had put

every bit of the royal horse-furniture on, for fear the discovery of any portion of it in his place might incriminate him. The holster caps were also green, showing that the man who had originally possessed the horse had belonged to the queen's troop, green being their colour, as blue was the king's.

In an instant Aubrey had an idea. He was possessed of a complete outfit and mount; as a soldier he would very likely be able to pass through the army unchallenged. He and the dead man were remarkably alike, and the latter having only served a week or so, few could know much of him. Besides, the handkerchief which Aubrey still had tied round his jaws would help to disguise him should he by chance meet any men of the Life Guards, which he did not consider likely.

The attempt was worth making, and without the loss of a moment Aubrey set about it.

Conquering his first repugnance to touch the dead man, he quickly stripped him of arms, coat, breeches, and boots. He then changed into them and dressed the dead man in his own clothes.

Wiping the dew off his cuirass, and donning the feathered hat, Aubrey mounted, and setting off at a good speed, in due course reached Yeovil.

Several times he was challenged by parties of soldiers, but on saluting the officers and saying he rode on the king's service, and by assuming the superior air of the Life Guards towards the soldiers of the line, he got safely through.

At Yeovil, feeling ravenously hungry, for he had eaten nothing for nearly twenty hours, during which time he had been mostly on the move, he entered the 'Three Choughs' and called for dinner.

He thoroughly enjoyed his meal, and was rising from the table to settle with his host when a clatter of hoofs on the cobbled courtyard below him attracted his attention. He looked out, and to his utter dismay, saw a troop of royal cavalry, and, worse still, by the housings and the green facings on the scarlet coats he saw they belonged to the queen's troop of Life Guards, the uniform of which corps he was at that instant wearing!

Chance of escape there was none; to cross the courtyard without being seen was next to impossible, and if he concealed himself in the house, should he be discovered, even if not at once recognised as an impostor, he would run the risk of being arrested as a deserter.

He made up his mind to continue to carry matters boldly, and donning his hat, pulled the bandage well over his face, so as to hide it as much as possible, then left the room in which he had dined, and descended the stairs. In the passage, which was rather dark, he met several troopers crowding towards the common room, talking loudly and advancing with a jangle and a clatter.

The foremost stared a moment at Aubrey, then cried: 'Odds blood, here's Fairholt, our recruit!—Why, man, I thought your carcass was manuring that pestilent swamp of Zoyland.'

'Nay,' said another, 'the louts with scythes frightened him, and he was spurring home to his mammy.'

'No, I was spurring back to my friends,' said Aubrey, speaking as though the wound on his cheek had affected his speech. 'I have had a rough experience, and after being left for dead fell into the hands

of the insurgents, who carried me far from the battle-field. Escaping from them, I missed my way, and 'twas not till I arrived here that I discovered I was riding away from, instead of towards, the troops.'

'Ha, ha, suckling,' laughed a handsome trooper, 'when you have served a year or two in our ranks I'll warrant me you'll be wiser. But come, comrade, join me in a tankard, for the dust of the road clogs my throat. You are, at least, one man less the Guards will have to mourn for, and sink me, we've lost enough over this miserable business.'

'And thank the Fates we are leaving this vile country of savages behind us, and can soon hope to be in London again,' said another.

They had by that time entered the common room, where almost the first man Aubrey saw was Ralph Tresham, with his head sunk in a pewter tankard. He looked at Aubrey, gave a choking gasp, spilt the remainder of the liquor down his scarlet coat, and would have blurted out some compromising words had not Aubrey smacked him on the back and said, 'Don't be frightened, comrade. Fairholt has not come back from the dead, only got well out of an awkward adventure.'

A look of intelligence flashed across Ralph's face and he shook Aubrey's hand.

'I congratulate you,' he said; and drawing his friend aside they conversed in low tones for some minutes while their companions were eating and drinking. Aubrey told Ralph just how matters stood.

'I'll stand by you in this, Aubrey, of course,' said Ralph. 'You're as much like Fairholt as two peas in a pod, and none of our fellows had time to know

much of him. Besides, uniform makes all men look very much alike. I question, though, if you would be able to carry this through if it wasn't for having a friend like me in the troop. If you will be guided by me we shall, I think, manage; for, strangely enough, Fairholt and I were pretty friendly.'

'I am not likely to quarrel with your guidance when my life depends upon it.'

'Good! The only difficulty will be if they identify Fairholt's body.'

'I dressed him in my clothes; he will be taken for one of Monmouth's men.'

'That's true. It was a fortunate thought of yours, for none of the rebels will escape our men; the country is overrun with troops, and Kirke, who commands the Tangier regiment, spares neither young nor old.'

'Who speaks of Kirke?' cried the handsome Guardsman who had before spoken. 'Kirke is a Turkish infidel, but only for the work we have left behind. It was his work for the Gentlemen of the Guards. We are soldiers, not butchers.' And these sentiments seemed to be shared by most of those present.

'I must carry you to our cornet, to whom you must repeat your story,' said Ralph; and he and Aubrey sought out that officer, who was rapidly getting through his second bottle of wine.

'Here is Fairholt rejoined,' said Ralph; and he invented a wonderful story of how Aubrey had been wounded, left senseless on the field, captured and dragged away by the peasants to a lonely house; how he had escaped, found his horse and galloped off, meeting his troop by accident, as related.

The cornet took very little notice of the tale. 'Let him resume his duties if he is fit,' he said, 'though we could have better spared him than some other good comrades we are leaving behind for ever.'

CHAPTER XVII.

OF A MAN-HUNT IN THE NEW FOREST.

AFTER leaving the cornet, Ralph explained to Aubrey how, news having been received that Monmouth's horse, ridden almost to death, had been found turned loose on Cranbourne Chase, and that the saddle and bridle had been discovered concealed close by, their troop had at once been ordered in pursuit.

'So we have a good forty mile ride before us,' he concluded.

Soon after, the trumpet sounded, the troopers mounted, and by forced marches, reached Cranbourne Chase. Here they came across a part of the Somersetshire Militia who were forming a chain of posts from the sea to the northern extremity of Dorsetshire.

News, welcome to all but Aubrey, was there learnt that at five o'clock that morning Lord Grey had been captured, and had submitted with great calmness.

The cavalry were split up into tens and were instructed to ride over the heathy country, and to make strict inquiries of the natives for news of the fugitives.

Ralph and Aubrey acted together, and the latter's heart fell within him as he noticed the thoroughness with which the search was being made.

In one of the cottages a common labourer confessed to having changed clothes with Monmouth the night before. This man was arrested, Monmouth's

laced coat, hat, boots, and sword were found, and the strictness of the search was redoubled.

Attention was presently called to an extensive tract of land separated from the open country by an enclosure, and divided by numerous hedges into small fields, in many of which pease, rye, and oats grew to a height sufficient to hide a man.

A woman said she had seen strangers lurking in the covert, and as night fell a complete cordon of troops was drawn round the enclosure, every man having orders to shoot or stab any who tried to pass without giving the word. A reward of five thousand pounds was set upon Monmouth's head, and it was promised that every man who did his duty should receive a share. All were, therefore, keen on the scent, the greed of gain overcoming the scruples of those, of whom there were many even among the soldiers, who in their hearts sympathised with Monmouth, and might have been inclined to let him slip through their fingers.

Twice during the night soldiers fired their pieces, asserting that they had seen figures moving amongst the bushes, but morning came and the fugitives were still undiscovered. Then several dogs of quick scent were turned in amongst the rye and oats, and in about an hour a loud shout announced that a capture had been made.

Aubrey and Ralph trotted over to the spot whence came the shout, and found a tall, big man in the hands of some of the militia. Aubrey saw at once it was the Brandenburger, Buyse, with whom he had crossed swords the day of Dare of Taunton's death. The German behaved with characteristic stoicism.

'Pouf!' he said, with a grim smile, 'I haf given you some trouble, but you are like your bulldogs, you hang on.'

One or two of the soldiers would have handled the prisoner roughly, for they were disappointed that it was not Monmouth, but an officer at once interfered.

'*Zum Henker*, don't you know how to treat a prisoner of war?' cried Buyse angrily. 'I am a paid soldier, and I claim a soldier's treatment. *Potztausend*, I haf earned my *Geld*, and, for now all is *verloren*, I capitulate.'

'You shall be properly treated,' said the officer in charge of the militia, 'and if you can tell us where the duke is you will perhaps earn a pardon.'

'Why deny it, Herr Captain? He is near here somewhere, we parted a few hours ago; he cannot escape, and he will be ready to give in for food, for he is starving. 'Tis no use hanging out any longer, and if any one will give me a pipe of tobacco I shall look upon it as the act of a good comrade.'

A soldier gave him what he asked for, and Buyse filled and lit a big pipe with a china bowl, after which he was led away, while the hunt for the Duke of Monmouth was carried on with new vigour.

The corn and copsewood were now beaten with more care than ever, and it was not very long before a man was discovered hiding in a ditch. Aubrey was close to the spot, and saw the soldiers spring upon their prey.

The prisoner wore the dress of a shepherd, but in spite of his deadly pale face, his beard—of several days' growth and strangely gray—his dishevelled

hair, and muddy appearance, Aubrey recognised the duke; but how different, how appallingly different, from the handsome, graceful, elegant gentleman he had seen on his arrival at Lyme.

Monmouth trembled greatly and appeared unable to speak. His pockets were searched, but contained nothing but a few pease, a watch, some money, a small book or two, and the George with which his royal father, Charles the Second, had years before decorated his favourite son.

The troop closed round the wretched prisoner, messages were sent off with the welcome news to James, and then the troop marched to Ringwood, where Lord Grey was already a prisoner.

At Ringwood a stay of two days was made. Aubrey's troop, taking precedence over the militia, and in fact over all other soldiers except the king's own troop of Life Guards, had the honour of guarding Monmouth. A man was always stationed in the room with the duke, and had orders at once to stab him to death with his sword did he make any attempt to escape. This sentry was changed every hour, and was not allowed to converse with the prisoner.

To Aubrey's joy he took his turn at this duty, standing inside the door with his drawn sword in his hand. Monmouth did not look up when the sentry was changed, he being busy writing at the table. Aubrey tried to attract the duke's attention; but Monmouth, after giving the soldier one glance, did not recognise him, and went on with his writing.

Aubrey again attracted his attention, and Monmouth, turning in his chair, Aubrey placed a finger on his lips and motioned the duke to approach.

'Do you not recognise me, your grace?' he whispered; 'tis Aubrey Berkeley.'

'Saints preserve us, so it is!' cried Monmouth, tears welling to his eyes; 'have you run these risks for me?' and he wrung Aubrey's hand.

'No; accident places me in this position, but I am willing to help you; keep up your heart, other friends will rally round us, and we may be able to do much.'

'Oh if I can only get out of this mess, never more will I meddle with State affairs. Believe me, dear friend, I have been fooled, totally misled. Wicked men have used me for their own purposes. Ferguson, the scoundrel, I am certain has betrayed me; he it was who dragged me, incited me, forced me into this affair. Wildman assured me London would rise for me, Delamere, Lovelace, all promised me, and now have all deserted me.'

'Courage, your grace, you may yet escape.'

'Oh I trust so. I have written to the king. I have humbled myself—oh how I have descended; but my life is dear to me, and I can tell the king a secret that he would give much to learn. I can whisper one word in his ear that will astonish him and win my pardon. And in that, Mr Berkeley, you may perhaps help me. When we get to London ask my friends to use every endeavour to get the king to agree to an interview. If I can only see him I must prevail, for though he has always been my enemy, and I know hates me, I shall be able to convince him that I shall never trouble him more. I may thus win my pardon, though God knows I shall never forgive myself for having caused the death of those brave, devoted peasants who gave

their lives for me on that terrible morning amongst the fatal swamps of Sedgemoor.'

Aubrey assured the duke that he would do all he could ; and then, for fear of being discovered, the duke reseated himself, and in due course Aubrey was relieved.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OF THE MEETING BETWEEN UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

AT the end of two days, the prisoners, under a strong escort, started for London. The duke travelled in a coach with an officer who had orders instantly to despatch him should any attempt be made at rescue.

The trainbands turned out at all the big towns they passed through, and on the third day they reached Vauxhall, where Lord Dartmouth, with a company of infantry, received the prisoners, who were put in a barge and rowed down the river to Whitehall Stairs.

Twelve men of the Guards were chosen to accompany Monmouth on his short journey down the Thames, and Aubrey was one of them. All the twelve bore about them some marks of the fight at Sedgemoor—bandaged heads or limbs, cut or shot accoutrements, faces singed by powder, or some such marks—and the men were probably chosen on that account, as the officers were anxious to convince the king of the energy with which they had suppressed the insurrection, and to show him that the service had been no light one.

From Vauxhall to the palace was only a short distance, and at Whitehall Stairs they were met by the Palace Guards.

Six men were detailed to guard Lord Grey, and six the duke, Aubrey being with the latter.

Monmouth's arms were tied behind his back, but

his hands were left free, and in this way, crumpled and dishevelled from their long journey, they entered the splendid palace of which Monmouth for so many years had been the principal ornament, allowed to stand before the king, his father, with his head covered; the only subject besides the Duke of York who had worn the imperial purple of mourning; admired, courted, and sought after by all.

What his thoughts were as he was led along, bound like a felon, surrounded by Guards who, whatever pity they felt for him, showed none, gazed at insolently by the very lackeys and menials where in the heyday of his popularity earls and dukes had bowed low before him, the imagination can only suggest.

He was conducted to the apartments of Chiffinch, the page of the back stairs under both Charles and James. In a room there the king awaited him; and four soldiers being left outside to guard the door, Aubrey and one other, with an officer, ushered their prisoner into the royal presence.

James, clad in richly laced brown velvet, sat beside a small table in front of the window, and behind him stood one whom Aubrey instantly recognised as the infamous Sunderland.

A dark, stern-looking lady, whom Aubrey afterwards learned was Mary of Modena, James's consort, sat on the other side of the table.

The duke made a most lowly obeisance to the queen, who turned from him in disgust.

The duke, already very pale, turned paler, and on perceiving Sunderland gave a start of astonishment, while beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead.

'So, Monmouth, we meet again!' said the king sternly.

'And under unhappy circumstances, your Majesty,' said the duke humbly. 'Oh sire, pardon me, and I declare to you I will be the most loyal, most faithful of your subjects;' and dropping on his knees he crawled forward, and with his hands, though his arms were pinioned behind him, he endeavoured to clasp the king's knees.

James waved him off.

'You spoke of a secret you have,' he said; 'tis that I am here to learn.'

'If you will promise me my life, your Majesty, my secret shall be yours, though I warn you 'twill destroy your faith in one you now hold in high estimation.'

Aubrey, who watched this scene with fascination, saw Sunderland start at these words and whisper in James's ear.

'You have been guilty of heinous crimes,' said James. 'You have set your name to a most treasonable declaration filled with atrocious calumnies, you have assumed the royal title, have called me murderer and impostor, have stirred my subjects up to rebellion and led them against my soldiers, causing much loss of life. For such treason there can be no pardon this side the grave.'

'On my honour, sire, I have been led away,' pleaded the duke, while tears stood in his eyes. 'I have been the dupe, the tool of wicked men. I never wished to take the crown; and as to the declaration, I did not write it, I did not even read it; 'twas all the work of that direful villain, Ferguson.'

'Do you expect me to believe,' answered James, with contempt, 'that you set your hand to such a paper without knowing what it contained?'

'I was driven to it,' again pleaded Monmouth.

'Oh sire, pity and forgive me! I confess I have done wrong, been wicked, been mad; but I was led away by horrid people who made me believe things of your Majesty that made me do what I did. But I do solemnly declare I repent, and will never so offend again. Use me with mercy, and grant me a life I shall ever afterwards be ready to sacrifice in your service.'

'All this is not to the point,' said James, more sternly. 'You said you had a secret; I am here to learn it.'

The duke began to see there was little chance of melting James's hard heart, but he continued to plead.

'Remember, I am your brother's son,' he said; 'and if you take my life it is your own blood you will shed.'

'And would you have hesitated to spill my blood had your rebellious peasants gained the day at Sedgemoor?' asked the king angrily. 'If you have anything to say, say it, and if you want to gain my favour tell me the names of your associates in this most bloody business.'

Some part of Monmouth's courage seemed to return to him when he saw the king was inexorable.

'Nay, sire,' he said; 'enough blood has been shed already. I will never betray those who have been true to me.'

The king asked several questions and kept repeating, as was his wont when he had made up his mind firmly on a subject, 'I am here to learn your secret. What is it?'

The duke would not reply to his question for some time, then said, looking fixedly at Sunderland, 'There

are those present, your Majesty, that render it impossible for me to say what I would.'

'Bah! you do but juggle with words,' replied the king angrily. Then he produced a paper which set forth that everything stated in Monmouth's declaration was false; and this, on his arms being unfastened, he made the duke sign.

After that, Monmouth again piteously begged for his life, when the queen, rising from her seat, stood before the wretched captive, and in a voice vibrating with scorn and contempt, cried, 'Begone, craven! you sue for life like some lackey. You, who presumed to usurp the title of king! Why, you haven't the courage of a scullery wench when your miserable, misspent life is in danger! Where is now your vaunted courage and your fine airs? Can there be any royal blood in the veins of such a nerveless suppliant? I doubt it. Forsooth, you would disgrace your sire, were he a tailor. Pluck up your courage, man; the hangman will never touch you. You will die of fright before he reaches you.'

At this gross insult Monmouth drew himself up, the colour came back to his cheeks, and he said loudly, 'Madam, your rebuke has not been undeserved.' Then to the king he said, 'Is there no hope for me, your Majesty?'

But James, turning his back on him, replied, 'I came to hear your secret, not to pardon you.'

The duke then turned to the door, and the Guards took him in charge again.

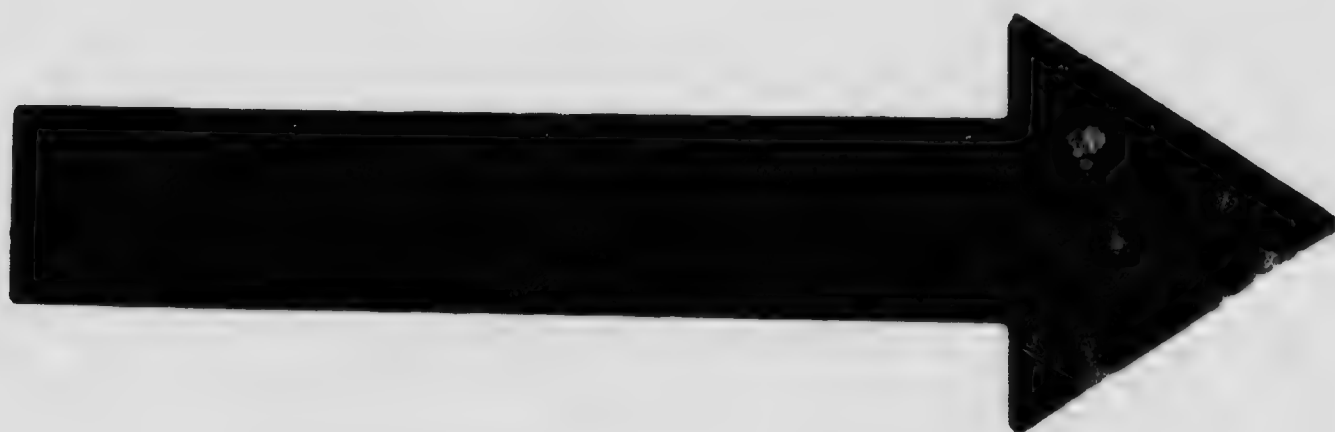
Lord Grey was next ushered in; but he, who had been accused of cowardice on the field of battle, behaved himself with a fortitude that moved even the compassion of the hard-hearted James. He



The queen, rising from her seat, stood before the wretched captive.

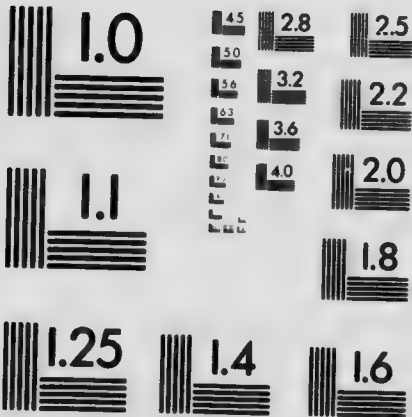
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frankly confessed himself guilty, made no excuses, and did not ask his life.*

He was taken from the king's presence, when he and the duke were again marched through the magnificent galleries of Whitehall, which Monmouth then saw for the last time. Still escorted by the Guards, he re-embarked and went down the river to the Tower, which he entered under that grim Traitor's Gate through which so many had gone to their doom; and, after having handed the unhappy captive over to the governor, Aubrey and his comrades returned to Whitehall.

The troop had gone on to their barracks, which stood on the spot now occupied by the building known as the Horse Guards; but accommodation being limited there, and both Aubrey and Ralph being new-comers, they were, according to the custom which then prevailed, billeted out at the 'Golden Cross' in the Strand.

* Note D, 'Lord Grey,' page 320.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF A PLOT TO RESCUE MONMOUTH FROM THE TOWER.

BY the time Aubrey reached his quarters he was tired out, and getting off to bed as soon as possible, undisturbed by the strangeness of his surroundings, he slept long and soundly.

The next day many of the Guardsmen applied for and obtained leave to visit their friends or families, to rest, or otherwise to follow their inclination. Those who remained behind were busy replenishing their wardrobes, which had sadly suffered during the short campaign; making application for arrears of pay, and so on.

In the forenoon Aubrey sought a surgeon and had the wound on his cheek properly dressed, for it was giving him considerable pain, inflammation having set in. On leaving the surgeon's house he came face to face with a man who stared hard at him and whom he at once recognised as Lord Lovelace.

Aubrey would have passed him without speaking, trusting not to be recognised; but his lordship immediately slipped his arm through Aubrey's, and drawing him aside, said, 'So Mr Berkeley has turned Life Guardsman to escape the fury of James, eh?'

The fact of being thus easily recognised much disturbed Aubrey, for what Lord Lovelace could do, others could. He replied, somewhat coldly, 'I will trouble you, my lord, not to speak my name aloud. In the Guards I am Harry Fairholt, and I must say I think you used me somewhat unhandsomely.'

'By my soul, lad, I had no intention to do so. If you would have joined us I would have taken you into my entire confidence, and the fact that we used your services against your will, as it were, was purely accidental. Your very ignorance of the plot was both your and our safeguard.'

'You might at least have kept your word and have sent a messenger to me at Crewkerne, as you promised.'

'Again I was powerless; I had not one trusty soul on whom to rely, and to have been betrayed then would have been to ruin all. On my honour as a gentleman, I intended you nothing but good, and if the affair had succeeded, as it should have done, you would have found your reward.'

'As I am like to now by the block or the rope.'

'Not while Lovelace has a sword to draw in your defence or a guinea to spend for you. But come, close by is the Mermaid Inn. There we can dine and talk in safety. I am dying to learn all about that terrible business in the West, which through the treachery of some and the folly of others has so lamentably miscarried.'

Soon both were seated in a private room in the 'Mermaid,' and Aubrey had told his tale.

'Had Monmouth pushed on to Exeter after he had defeated the militia at Axminster,' said Lord Lovelace, 'the town would have been his without a blow, as would Bristol had he gone straight there from Shepton Mallet. He could have held out in either of those places for weeks, and after one such victory dozens of the Whig gentry would have declared for him.'

'As it was, none did,' said Aubrey dryly.

'Twas the fault of that villainous Wildman,' cried Lovelace angrily. 'He got frightened and deserted the cause, and Ferguson, rogue that he is, did a vast deal of harm with his mad declaration. Then Argyll's defeat paralysed all of us who were only waiting for Monmouth to get one real victory to rise in the North.'

'Too late now. Monmouth is doomed, I fear.'

'Not yet,' said Lovelace, lowering his voice to a whisper. 'Some friends of his are determined to effect a rescue. Will you join us?'

'What! an escape from the Tower?'

'Why not? Grey escaped once. What cannot be done by force can be won by gold.'

Aubrey hesitated.

'My personal sympathies are with the duke,' he said, 'for I believe he has indeed been duped.'

'Spoken like a man!' cried Lovelace. 'If you are willing to help, your being in the Guards is of the utmost value to us, for it must be by a ruse that we shall free the duke; force is no good.'

Soon afterwards, excusing himself on the plea of being anxious to call on a friend, Aubrey took leave of Lovelace, and went on to Mr Kiffin's, where he found the old man plunged in the deepest grief. Over and over again Aubrey had to tell him the particulars of that terrible onfall at Sedgemoor, at which the old gentleman would cry and wring his hands, then fall to praying that the Almighty would spare his lambs, his boys, his beautiful grandsons, who were all the world to him.

Aubrey told how he had seen William Hewling safe almost at the end of the fight, and how Benjamin had not been in the fight at all.

'He at least should escape,' concluded Aubrey. 'He could get away, or lie hidden when he heard the news of the rout, or, as he had not fought, would be able to clear himself if arrested.'

'You do not know my boys, my loving, beautiful boys,' sobbed the poor grandfather. 'If one is in danger so is the other, for if aught befell one, such is their affection that the other would, at any cost, share his brother's trouble.'

It was evening when Aubrey returned to his quarters, where Ralph at once met him, his face flushed, his eyes shining with excitement.

'There has been a mysterious stranger for you,' he said; 'a man of quality I'm certain. He wanted to see you badly, and as you were not here, seeing I was a lad of parts, he opened his business to me, and I have promised to stand by him.'

Aubrey at once guessed that this stranger was Lovelace, and trembled to think what he had told Ralph, who was far from being discreet.

'He took me entirely into his confidence,' said Ralph, 'and, between ourselves, Monmouth is much to be pitied. Charles was a king much more after my heart than is this sour-faced James, and a son of Charles has my sympathy. Besides, the plan is so simple, 'tis sure to succeed, and there is a reward at the end of it will find us in guineas for a year, as well as making us friends who will be able to give us a lift up at Court.'

'Heavens, Ralph, have a care what you are saying. You are King James's sworn soldier, yet you calmly talk of helping his enemies to escape. Don't you realise you are playing a game that may end at the hangman's hands?'

'Bah! nothing is done without risk; but come, I have promised to carry you with me to the "Golder Compass" in Petty Wales, where we are going to meet our mysterious friend and his companions.'

Accordingly, donning cloaks over their scarlet coats, as soon as it was dark the two set off on foot, and in about half-an-hour had entered the bar of the tavern in that low nest of houses at the Tower known as Petty Wales.

A man, whom Aubrey had never before seen, was sitting in the bar smoking a long pipe, and at sight of the two Guardsmen he arose and made them a sign to follow. In an inner room Lord Lovelace sat in earnest conversation with two strangers whom he did not name, but who he said were heart and soul in the attempt.

He entered at full length into the scheme, which at least sounded plausible.

A party of men in military uniform, armed with a letter bearing the royal seal and addressed to the governor, would enter the Tower. The letter would say that the prisoner was to be handed over to the officer in charge, and taken again to Whitehall. Having reached the river, the whole party would embark in a boat, and would pull rapidly to where a hoy would be in waiting with sails ready to set on the instant, when they would drop downstream, put to sea, and make for Holland.

'The very simplicity of the plan ensures its success,' said Lovelace, who was always enthusiastic. 'One of these gentlemen starts at once to procure the boat, which will be at Gravesend in thirty-six hours from now. I guarantee the letter to the governor, which, though a forgery, will be properly stamped.

Sunderland is deeply involved, and I can bring pressure on him to make him help us, under threat of the duke's exposing to the king his share in the late rebellion. The only difficulty, Mr Berkeley, will be the uniforms, and I want you and your friend here to procure us four. This you ought to be able to do, and smuggle them down here. I shall, myself, personate the officer, and friends of mine will play four of the soldiers, you two making six. You have nothing to do but to get us the uniforms for part of the escort, and after we embark remain here till we have got clear off. Suspicion cannot fall upon you if you are careful.'

'We shall be able to manage the uniforms,' said Ralph.

'Then the thing is as good as done. The lieutenant of the Tower is in our pay, and will be able to help us materially. Two nights from this the duke shall be free.'

Something of Lovelace's enthusiasm was imparted to his hearers.

'The only other thing is,' he concluded, 'that the duke must be informed of what is doing, so as to be ready to play his part. I have written a letter, Mr Berkeley, which I intend you to carry to him. I am expecting every minute a friend who will bring me a packet addressed to the duke and bearing the royal seal. This you will boldly take to the Tower as if you had just come from Whitehall, than which, of course, nothing is more likely. You will say your instructions are to deliver the letter into Monmouth's own hands, and you will at once be conducted to him. The letter you carry will be only a sheet of blank paper, but you will give the duke a letter from me

at the same time, of course, without being observed. Knowing you, he will guess friends are working for him and be careful. Having given him the letter, if you can, add a few words of what we are doing, then return here. Your uniform will be sufficient guarantee of your good faith, and no one will suspect you.'

Aubrey had an opinion of his own on this point, but such was Lovelace's power of persuasion that he consented to the arrangement.

Lovelace handed him the private letter, which he concealed inside his coat, and hardly had he done so when a gentleman wearing a cloak was ushered in. Giving a hasty glance round, and receiving an assurance from Lovelace that he was among friends, he produced a letter addressed to the Duke of Monmouth and bearing the official seal.

The arrangements were soon made. Lovelace had a horse in the stable of the tavern, and this being brought round, Aubrey mounted, it being decided that it would look more as if he had ridden on the spur from Whitehall.

On clanging the great bell at the gate of the Tower, Aubrey declared his business to the sentry, who passed the report on, when one-half of the massive gate was opened, and he entered. On his dismounting in front of the guard-house, the sergeant-in-charge conducted him by the Lion and Bell Towers to the quarters of the lieutenant, in whose house Monmouth was lodged.

The lieutenant himself saw Aubrey, and giving one glance at the letter, sent a warder to conduct him to Monmouth's apartment.

While he was being conducted under the walls and

grim towers of the fortress, Aubrey's heart had keen misgivings about his being able to get out of London's stronghold as easily as he had entered it; and while he followed the warder to Monmouth's apartments the same thought, coupled with conjectures as to what would be his fate should his real mission be discovered, crossed his mind.

He had expected to find the duke in a bare cell, sitting crushed beneath his misfortunes; instead, he found him in a comfortably furnished room engaged in earnest talk with two bishops.

These, after bowing low to the duke, Aubrey saluted, when they turned away, speaking earnestly together, while the duke, instantly recognising Aubrey, advanced to speak privately with him.

'Dear friend,' he whispered, 'it is indeed like a gleam of sunshine to see once more before I die a well-loved face, a trusted companion.'

'Speak not of dying,' replied Aubrey, in low tones. 'I come to tell you of our plans for your escape.'

Monmouth's face, which had been pale, flushed, and, glancing towards the two bishops, he took the blank paper which Aubrey offered him. With a meaning look, Aubrey passed him the second unperceived by any one. The bishops, thinking the royal prisoner might have some important news, quietly withdrew from the room; and after reading Lovelace's letter Monmouth stood for a moment, his breath coming in quick, short gasps. Then he turned to Aubrey, who saw his eyes were dim with tears.

'I am, indeed, the most unfortunate of men,' he said; 'but the one great consolation I have had has been the knowledge that I have possessed some true friends, and I am proud to number you, Mr Berkeley,

and Lord Lovelace among them. To risk your lives for me now when you have nothing to gain and everything to lose is noble, heroic, and touches me to the heart. My deepest gratitude is yours, but, alas! it is too late to think of escape.'

'How, your grace? In two nights' time everything will be ready.'

'By that time, Mr Berkeley, my mangled remains will have been in their grave thirty-six hours.'

Aubrey staggered back, horrified. 'It cannot be,' he said.

'It will be even so. The two bishops you saw with me just now are here to prepare me for my end. To-morrow morning, at ten o'clock, without the faintest shadow of a trial, I, a duke of the royal blood, son of one king and nephew of another, shall have my head struck off by the common executioner.'

As the duke covered his face with his hands Aubrey felt horror-stricken.

'It cannot be,' he repeated; 'the king is never so harsh, so'——

The duke interrupted him. 'You know not my uncle,' he said. 'Cold, stern, bigoted in his religion, implacable in his hatred, merciless to those he fears, these very stones,' laying his hand on the wall, 'will melt sooner than his heart. Poor, poor England, tyranny worse than ever she suffered before is in store for her! As I stand at the brink of the grave I feel the truth of what I say, and rejoice I shall not live to see it.'

'Your grace, I trust all is not yet lost. You have powerful friends; they can, they must do something.'

'They would, and perhaps could, if there were time, and this is known to one who fears that dis-

closures might be made which would imperil his head. He has therefore used all his influence, which I am afraid was hardly required, to persuade the king to hurry on my death.'

'Who is that one?' asked Aubrey.

'My Lord Sunderland, one of the greatest hypocrites and intriguers in England. 'Twas against him I would have warned the king when I saw him; but Sunderland was present, and I could see my uncle would believe nothing against his favourite. Sunderland was privy to this unfortunate attempt of mine, and had it been successful would have been one of the first to lay his services at my feet.'

'Traitor!' cried Aubrey; 'he shall be brought to account for it.'

'Nay, let him go; his conscience shall be his punishment. And now you can do me a service, if you will.'

'Command me, your grace.'

'Call on Doctor Tenison, the vicar of Martin's Church, and request him to come to me. I would sooner hear him than any other divine, and I have that to tell him which I would impart to no other man. Then accept this ring for yourself, wear it in memory of one who loved you and hopes you will forgive him for having led you into what has been a bad business for you.'

Aubrey's heart was too full for words; and, having placed the ring upon his finger, he would have taken the duke's hand in farewell, but Monmouth threw his arms round him and embraced him.

Then without further words he left the apartment, Monmouth waving his hand to him as he withdrew.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW MONMOUTH PAID THE PENALTY.

THE news which Aubrey brought back from the Tower absolutely staggered the conspirators.

'The duke to die in the morning, without trial, without sentence!' cried Lovelace; ''tis simple murder. James dare not do it. 'Tis an affront to the aristocracy, the nation—nay, civilisation.'

'There is small doubt in my mind that it will be done though,' said Aubrey, and he repeated all that Monmouth had told him.

'That dog Sunderland, I knew he was in the affair, but I knew not how deeply. He has the ear of the king though. I will to him and threaten him with disclosure if he does not procure the postponement of the execution. You set off to the vicar, Berkeley, I and a trusted friend will see Sunderland, and at my sword's point I will make him swear to save Monmouth, or I will run him through the body.'

They all then left the tavern, going their different ways.

Ralph accompanied Aubrey, and as they passed along through the City the hum of gossiping voices was heard discussing the news that Monmouth was to die on the morrow. This information had come from Whitehall, and the truth of it no one doubted. Excited groups around the taverns, the coffee-houses, and in the streets, talked over the matter, and from their loud remarks it was evident that most of their

sympathies were with the duke, who, with all his faults, was immensely popular.

Aubrey found Doctor Tenison at home, and delivered his message.

'I had already heard the sad news,' answered the divine, 'and was hastening to offer my services to one of whom in his earlier days I had great hopes.'

Having reached their quarters, Aubrey and Ralph sat long discussing the news which was then causing such a tremendous sensation in the capital. It was late when they went to bed, and they had not been there very long before they were roused by a servant hammering at their door and saying a traveller below had arrived and wanted instant speech with Mr Fairholt.

Hastily dressing, Aubrey descended to the courtyard, where he saw sitting on horseback a cloaked figure who beckoned to him. In the moonlight he recognised Lovelace.

'I am afraid all is lost,' said the horseman. 'I saw Sunderland and threatened that if he did not use his influence with the king to stay the execution I would expose him, though, in truth, I know not how deeply he was involved. He defied me, when I drew on him and threatened to stab him; but he had creatures within call, and I had as much as I could do to come off with my life.'

'Afterwards I saw Doctor Tenison, and the good man told me he had brought a letter from Monmouth directed to the king, which, if James read, he must at least stay the execution, if only to make inquiries. The doctor carried this letter himself to Whitehall; but Sunderland saw him and compelled him to give

it up, saying he himself would give it to the king. He was away some half-hour, then he dismissed the doctor, saying the king would consider the matter. When I heard this I could have wept for anger, for I am certain Sunderland read the letter himself, and that it never got to James at all, though Doctor Tenison would not believe it. However, till I see how the wind blows 'tis too dangerous for me to stay longer here, for I know not what was in the duke's letter nor what Sunderland may do. So I must ride at once to the coast, where friends will advise me of what happens. I fear all is lost for Monmouth, and I want to warn you to have a care, for James is a very tiger.'

This news was no more than Aubrey expected, and on parting with Lovelace he returned to Ralph and told him what had happened.

'Well, we've done all that we could,' said Ralph sleepily, and turning over he was soon again wrapped in slumber, and Aubrey felt he could not do better than follow his example.

By trumpet sound that morning all the men of the Guards billeted out were called to headquarters, and there Aubrey and Ralph learnt that their troop, with a troop of the Blues, had been chosen to form the mounted guard round the scaffold on which Monmouth was to be executed. They were accordingly paraded, and at about half-past seven marched off along the Strand, where already crowds of people were flocking Citywards.

They reached Tower Hill, on which a rough wooden scaffold, covered with black cloth, had been erected. Between the scaffold and the crowd strong barricades had been put up, and into the space thus

formed the Guards were marched, other troops being outside.

On the scaffold stood the block, beside which was the axe, a heavy, bright-bladed weapon with a long handle; behind the block was a coffin covered with black velvet.

At this sight Aubrey experienced a feeling of nausea such as he had never felt on the field of battle, and could he have got away he would have fled, irrespective of consequences, rather than witness the terrible scene that was to follow.

All round, as far as the eye could see, up Tower Hill, at the windows, on the roofs of the houses, and crowded on stands of every description, was visible a sea of heads, and a low, humming buzz of conversation rose on the warm summer air.

Soon after ten o'clock the gates of the Tower opened, and the lieutenant's coach, surrounded by a treble cordon of soldiers, slowly approached. Amid a deathlike silence it neared the scaffold, and when the soldiers had opened their ranks to let it pass, Monmouth, with two bishops, descended.

The duke was very elegantly and carefully dressed, and looked quite himself again. As he passed along the ranks of the Guards he saluted them with a smile, and when with a firm step he had ascended the scaffold loud sighs and groans of compassion broke from the vast assemblage of people.

The noise of groaning and weeping ceased as Monmouth stepped to the side of the scaffold, and, laying one hand lightly on the rail, said, 'I shall say but little, friends. I come here not to speak, but to die.'

The bishops interrupted him, and asked him to acknowledge resistance to the Crown to be sinful.

Monmouth's voice softened as he replied, looking straight at Aubrey, who was in the front rank and whom he recognised, 'I am sorry this invasion ever happened.'

'It cannot be called invasion; 'twas rank rebellion and treason,' said one of the sheriffs rudely.

'Call it by what name you please,' replied Monmouth, 'I am sorry for it and for the brave lives that have been lost by my means. I am truly repentant, and shall die like a lamb.'

'That may be but natural courage,' said one of the bishops.

'No,' replied the duke. 'I am as fearful as other men are, but now I have no fear, for I have that within me that tells me I have made my peace with God.'

With that he began to undress, while the bishops prayed.

The executioner's assistant wanted to put a cap over his eyes, but this he refused, when the bishops again addressed him.

'Your grace,' said one, 'you have been a soldier, and you will do a generous and Christian thing if you will please go to the rail, speak to the soldiers, and say that here you stand a sad example of rebellion, and entreat them and the people to be loyal to the king.'

At this the doomed man spoke warmly and said, 'I have told you I will make no speeches. I come to die, not to talk.'

But the bishops persisted, saying that ten words would be enough; when Aubrey, on whom the

terrible scene had made a great effect, groaned loudly in disapproval. This sound was immediately taken up by the other troopers, then by the crowd, till the voices of the bishops were drowned.

They looked at one another in surprise, and then round on the sea of faces in amazement at the outspoken sympathy with the duke.

Several gentlemen, while Monmouth had been on the scaffold, had arrived upon the scene, passed through the ranks of the soldiers, and now sat on horseback close to the scaffold. One of these, when Aubrey had groaned, looked sharply at him, and Aubrey caught his eye. His face coloured under the scrutiny, and he felt he was in danger, for the new-comer was his inveterate enemy, Jermyn.

Aubrey, however, at the moment gave him little attention, his eyes being fixed upon the scene before him.

Monmouth was feeling the edge of the axe, then turning to the headsman, one Jack Ketch, he took some gold from his pocket and handed it to him.

'Here,' said he, 'are six guineas for you. Do not hack me as you did my Lord Russell. I have heard you struck him three or four times; the axe, too, does not feel very sharp.'

'Tis both sharp enough and heavy enough, your grace,' replied the executioner in an unsteady voice, as though he were nervous.

'Do your business well, then, and my servant will give you some more gold.'

He again felt the edge of the axe, expressed some fear that it was not sharp enough, then laid his handsome head upon the block.

The divines cried, 'God accept your repentance;'

and Ketch, seizing his axe, raised and lowered it once or twice, as though judging his distance, then, swinging it high up above his head, he struck.

But the wretch was evidently so disconcerted, either at the calmness and courage of his victim, or at the idea of shedding royal blood, that he gave but a feeble stroke.

The poor duke struggled, half-rose from the block, and looked reproachfully at the executioner, then slowly the head sank once more. The stroke was repeated again and again, but still the neck was not severed, and the body continued to move.

Yells of rage and execration broke from the crowd, and had it not been for the soldiers and the barriers they would have rushed upon the scaffold and torn the executioner limb from limb.

Ketch threw down the axe in horror, and cried, 'I cannot do it, I cannot do it; my heart fails me.'

'Take up the axe, man,' ordered one of the sheriffs sternly, 'or the whip shall make acquaintance with your back.'

'Fling him over the rails,' roared the mob. 'Give him to us; we will leather his back.' And such a fury of yells broke out that the soldiers handled their carbines, expecting every moment to be attacked.

The sheriffs put such pressure to bear on the executioner that he again took up the axe, and with two more blows extinguished the last remains of life; but a knife was used to separate the head from the shoulders ere it was held up by the sheriff and shown to the crowd as the head of a traitor.

The words were received in an ominous silence, and the poor mangled remains were placed in the coffin and removed to the Tower to be buried.

The executioner had to be conveyed away under a strong guard of soldiers, or the mob would have torn him in pieces.

After the soldiers had reformed and marched off hundreds of people pressed forward to dip their kerchiefs in the blood of the popular martyr; and on one man of great stature holding up his blood-stained emblem, such a deep, loud groan of despair and horror went up from the people as caused those of the Court party to look blankly at one another, as well they might, for it was the first sign of that hatred and disgust at James's tyranny which ere so very many months had passed over his head was to hurl him ignominiously and for ever from the throne of his ancestors.*

* Note E, 'The Duke of Monmouth,' page 320.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW AUBREY RETURNED TO THE WEST.

AS a soldier, Monmouth had been deservedly popular. He had often displayed courage, which was common, and after a victory, shown mercy to the vanquished, which was rare.

Aubrey's troop, with grave faces, rode silently back to their quarters. The indecent haste of the execution and the barbarity with which it had been carried out filled all minds with fears and doubts. Monmouth's fortitude on the scaffold roused their sympathies.

If a duke of royal blood could be so treated with impunity, what consideration could any commoner expect at the king's hands, should he break the law or fall under his royal displeasure.

Aubrey was turning these things over in his mind when he suddenly noticed that Jermyn had joined the troop, and was riding at its head, talking to the major in command, and occasionally looking back along the ranks to where Aubrey rode.

The ease with which Lovelace had recognised him smote Aubrey with apprehension that Jermyn, whose eyes were sharpened by hate, had also done so, and this confirmed him in his resolve that no further good could come of his continuing to stay in London, and that the sooner he put a hundred miles between himself and the capital the better.

Arrived at their barracks, Aubrey was free of all

other duty for the day, but Ralph was on duty till eight o'clock.

Aubrey went to his billet, and after quietly dining, decided to call on old Mr Kiffin in order to learn whether any definite news had arrived from the West regarding the fate of his two grandsons.

He found Mr Kiffin still without definite news, but in a terrible state of alarm over the ugly rumours which were daily arriving of wholesale massacre by the soldiers.

Lord Feversham, a Frenchman by birth, imbued with continental ideas, after the battle had pursued the rebels without mercy, and had slaughtered all on whom suspicion fell. If any man accused another of having been favourable to Monmouth that man was straightway hanged.

Colonel Kirke, who commanded the regiment of infantry lately returned from Tangier, where for years they had been engaged against the heathen Moors, surpassed his superior in barbarity.

The device which the regiment bore on its colours was the Paschal lamb, and such was the brutality of the men that they were ironically called 'Kirke's Lambs.' *

This information old Mr Kiffin heard from a Bristol correspondent, but could learn nothing of his loved boys. Over and over again Aubrey had to repeat all he knew about the two brothers, and then their doting grandfather would indulge in speculations as to their fate, and so the hours sped till Aubrey found it was time to return to his quarters.

It was nearly nine o'clock, and Aubrey was taking his leave when a servant entered and

* Note F, 'Kirke's Lambs,' page 321.

announced that a young gentleman in military uniform had called and inquired whether Aubrey were there, and on hearing that he was, said he must have instant speech with him.

Mr Kiffin ordered that the caller should be admitted, and in a few moments Ralph entered the room. Concern was written on his face, and hastily saluting Mr Kiffin, he drew Aubrey aside and said, 'Danger is ahead. I have been trying to get to you for some hours past, but have been prevented. On coming off duty I hastened to our quarters, and hearing you had been out all day came on here at a venture.'

'What is wrong, Ralph?'

'Jermyn has been at the barracks this afternoon, and has been talking to several of the officers. I was sent for and questioned as to when you joined, your name, your family, and in fact, everything that could be asked about you. Then Nairn, of our troop, who was wounded at Sedgemoor, and has only just rejoined, swore he saw Fairholt shot dead by the same party of rebels who wounded him. You are to be arrested on your return, and will be questioned.'

'Then I must not return,' said Aubrey calmly.

'No; it will be better for you to fly from London at once,' said Ralph. 'But you must discard that scarlet coat.'

'Leave it to me,' said Mr Kiffin, roused out of himself by Aubrey's danger. 'There are hiding-places in this old house that have served me before this, and that would defy all James's myrmidons to discover. I will also find you a way of escape that will easily throw all your enemies off the scent.'

This was agreed to by all parties, and Aubrey was

glad enough to stay where he was. Then Ralph returned to his quarters, promising to let his friend know, when he could without risk, how things went.

During the next few days Ralph brought Aubrey word that Jermyn had made several visits to the barracks, and that many inquiries were still being made for him.

Then came news that both Benjamin and Will Hewling had been captured and were lodged in Exeter Jail.

Mr Kiffin was prostrated with grief until Aubrey pointed out to him that it was at least a mercy that his grandsons were alive; that now the first fury of the king's revenge was over, and that the very fact of their being lodged in jail instead of being at once hanged ensured them having a trial.

'You are wealthy,' concluded Aubrey, 'you can employ the best of counsel; and if all that is said be true, gold will buy a pardon for almost any offence.'

'Dear friend, you give me hope, you give me new life; but some one must go at once to my dear boys.'

'Would I do?' asked Aubrey.

'You! would you trust yourself down in that aceldama to serve my boys?'

'I would do more than that to serve either them or you. I cannot stay here much longer, for inactivity kills me. I will go down into the West to do what I can for you and yours.'

'Heaven bless and prosper your endeavours!' answered Mr Kiffin. 'I will procure you a good disguise—say the dress of a well-to-do yeoman—which, with a dark wig, will make a marvellous alteration in your appearance. The finest horse in London, and as much gold as you want, shall be yours.'

'Then set about your preparations at once, for the sooner I am on the road the better for us all.'

On the last day Aubrey spent with Mr Kiffin a Dutchman dined there, a quiet, reserved man, of whom Mr Kiffin, though he seemed quite well to understand his business, gave no information. The Dutchman evidently knew Aubrey had been mixed up with the western insurrection, and he asked many questions, weighing the answers in a quiet, grave manner peculiarly his own, but making no comments on the information received.

Thus it happened that soon after four o'clock on a lovely morning, Aubrey, well mounted and armed, feeling in his disguise pretty secure from observation, left the City by the east, so as to avoid passing Whitehall, and was soon out in the country.

He carried a large sum of money, either for obtaining legal assistance, or by bribery to effect the escape of his friends.

In spite of the sad mission he was bound upon, the beauty of the morning had its effect upon Aubrey; and as his horse broke into a gentle canter, entranced at being again in the saddle and away from the vile smells and head-splitting sounds of London, he could have shouted for joy.

He made good progress, but it was not until the fourth evening that he was again in that part of the country where he had witnessed such terrible scenes.

It was afternoon when he arrived upon the field of Sedgemoor—the last pitched battle ever fought on English ground. Great mounds marked the places where the dead had been hurriedly interred; a broken scythe-blade or two, articles of clothing, and the partly decomposed bodies of several horses,

still lay on that piece of ground between the Langmoor and Bussex Rhine where Monmouth's men had made their stand.

These sights were sad enough ; but as Aubrey proceeded on his way to Bridgwater he saw that a long line of gibbets had been erected, and on several of these the remains of those who had been hanged remained to rot in irons. The stench was such that Aubrey galloped past in horror, only to notice over the gates of Bridgwater the mangled remains and the heads of at least twenty rebels who had once been important men in the town. Parties of soldiers were billeted about the town, and the inhabitants wore a cowed, frightened look, which told a fearful tale of license, rapine, and massacre.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW JUDGE JEFFREYS OPENED HIS CAMPAIGN.

AUBREY passed the night at a small inn lying at the foot of the Quantock Hills, and next day rode without mishap to Exeter.

There was the same excitement there as at Bridgewater, a number of soldiers being quartered in the town.

It was necessary to move with great caution and not to ask questions too openly, as, though there were in the town numbers of friends and relatives of the unfortunate prisoners in the jail, of whom there were many, it was not wise to sympathise too openly with them. Thus it was not until the following evening that Aubrey was able to gather definite news.

From a man whom he recognised as having served in Grey's cavalry he learnt that during the rout that followed Sedgemoor the brothers Hewling had met, managed to get away together, and reached Lyme. There they put out to sea; but the weather was so bad that they were driven back again, the boat wrecked, and they with great difficulty managed to crawl ashore over the rocks. The country round was, however, full of soldiers, who were hanging without trial all on whom they laid hands, so the brothers, starved, destitute, and exhausted as they were, finding it impossible long to avoid capture, rather than trust to the soldiers, surrendered to a county magistrate whose house they were near. Thence they were conducted to Exeter Jail. They had been removed from there, but it was not known where.

Aubrey immediately set out to find them, and rode from centre to centre of the rebellion. It took him a week to accomplish his task, and then he discovered that William had been lodged in Dorchester Jail and Benjamin at Taunton.

The very day he discovered his friends' whereabouts, on his return to his inn he found a letter from Mr Kiffin awaiting him.

After conjuring Aubrey to spare no pains to save his grandsons, he went on to say :

'Now a calamity, dire and awful, falls upon us. On the western assize which is now opening, Lord Chief-Justice Jeffreys and four others are setting out. Lord Jeffreys all the world knows for a cruel and merciless bully, an unjust, time-serving man, whose avarice is beyond description, whose ambition is boundless, and whose cruelty is inconceivable. He will show small mercy to men accused of rebellion. To advance his own interests, or to curry favour with James, he would burn his own mother or hang his own father. But I have some hold over him, villain that he is, and I would have waited upon him before he started, but that I am confined again to my bed with gout. Therefore I send you an enclosed packet, which I pray you take an opportunity of placing in his hands unopened, when he shall have arrived in the West. I am sending you a messenger with three thousand pounds; when it arrives, go to Jeffreys and say that amount shall be his if he will save my boys. For reasons which I need not state, he will wish to oblige me; but bid him take heed how he trifles with me, for if he does, England shall ring with his infamy.—
Your faithful friend, RICHARD KIFFIN.'

Aubrey read this letter with mixed feelings, for such was the reputation of the Lord Chief-Justice that few men would run the risk of falling under his displeasure or of coming under the lash of his dreadful tongue. However, duty was always paramount with Aubrey, and he made up his mind at once to seek Jeffreys out.

The assizes had been opened at Winchester, and Aubrey determined to go to Dorchester to await Jeffreys' coming.

The morning after his arrival the assize service was held in the parish church, and Aubrey obtained a seat where he could get a good view of the Lord Chief-Justice.

Jeffreys came late, and all eyes were fixed upon him. He was rather above the middle height, and wore his magnificent robes with a certain grace that did not ill become him; but he had a haughty and insolent look upon his face. He showed signs of having in his younger days been exceedingly handsome; but his features were swollen and bloated, and were often distorted either with the pain of a chronic and painful disease from which he suffered, or the mad rage and lust for blood that often possessed him.

The sermon was a striking one, and the preacher reminded the judge that justice should be tempered with mercy.

As he uttered these words Aubrey's eyes were upon Jeffreys, and he observed that an ominous grin distorted his features.

After the sermon they went at once to the court-house, the sitting being adjourned till the next day.

Aubrey determined to try and see William Hewling, and accordingly went to the jail. Here he was un-

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successful in seeing Hewling, but heard that Jeffreys had sent word that any one who wished for leniency should plead guilty, while any man who put himself on his trial, and was found guilty, should have little time to live, and all the rigours of the law should be enforced against him.

This news caused a great sensation, and scores of those prisoners who had actually fought at Sedgemoor, or been otherwise mixed up with the rising, determined to plead guilty.

It was a time of fearful anxiety for all those friends and relatives of the prisoners assembled in Dorchester, and whatever hopes they might have had were considerably lowered by the erection that night in the market-place of an immense gibbet.

Long after most of the inhabitants had gone to bed the noise of nailing and hammering announced to them the fact that Jeffreys had opened his campaign in the West.

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE WAY IN WHICH JUSTICE WAS ADMINISTERED.

THE next morning great crowds of people assembled outside the court-house.

Aubrey was there early and managed to get in. The inside was hung with scarlet, 'twas said by Jeffreys' orders; and from the sight the spectators augured ill for the wretched prisoners.

The hour for the opening of the court went by, but the great crimson velvet canopied seat, with the gilt crown surmounting it and the coat of arms behind it, remained vacant.

In front of the seat of justice were two long, green-baize covered tables on which were heaps of papers, amongst which the Crown lawyers dived, turning and rustling, while they scribbled and chattered, from time to time looking up at the great clock.

The crowd inside, perspiring with the heat, began wonder what was the matter when the clerk of the court in stentorian tones announced, 'The Lord Chief-Justice.'

All the lawyers, both for defence and prosecution, sprang to their feet, and Jeffreys, his wig awry, and his face drawn with pain caused by his complaint, which was aggravated by his intemperate drinking, entered.

'How now?' he cried, almost as soon as he was seated; 'no prisoners at the bar. Are we to be kept waiting all day for the lazy scum? Where are the rogues? Is the king's Lord Chief-Justice to be

made a scoff of? By my gown, the sheriffs shall smart for this.'

'We did but wait for your lordship,' an official ventured to explain in a low tone. 'What!' roared Jeffreys; 'such impudence to my teeth; a tipstaff to complain that the Lord Chief-Justice kept him waiting. Commit the man, Mr Sheriff, for contempt; commit him instantly. I'll warrant him a thrashing that will make him less anxious to see me in future.'

The poor wretch was committed, and two prisoners were put in the dock, their names being announced by the clerk.

'Two only,' cried Jeffreys, 'and 'tis said there are three hundred rogues to try here! Dost think I am going to spend a year trying them?' Bring them up; crowd them in; let us see their impudent faces.'

Twelve men, of all ages and conditions, were then brought in, one among them being a Presbyterian divine named Minett.

Jeffreys rolled his bloodshot eyes over them with a wolfish look as the clerk read out their names and the crimes of which they were accused.

'Hurry, hurry, Mr Clerk,' cried Jeffreys. 'Be not too nice in your "accused of this, that, and the other." They all stand accused of treason against their sovereign lord and master, King James; is it not so?'

'It is, my lord, and they plead not guilty.'

'Not guilty!' yelled Jeffreys. 'Rogues, you know what I said, that every man of you who placed himself upon his trial, and was found guilty, should have short time to live, and should suffer all the rigours of the law. How not guilty? You all fought at Sedgemoor, I'll warrant?'

'My lord'—— began one of the counsel for the defence

'Have a care how you interrupt me,' cried Jeffreys to him savagely. 'Do these rogues plead guilty?'

'They do not, my lord,' replied the counsel, paler than the papers he held in his hand.

'Then they shall rue it,' cried Jeffreys, thumping his hand on the arm of the chair. 'Oh I promise ye, rogues,' he cried as he glowered at the terror-stricken prisoners, 'ye shall rue it. The hangman shall be warned to cut you from the gibbet quickly, and spare you nothing of your sentence, so that you lose no tittle of the agony of having your rebellious bowels torn out and burnt before your faces. Surely, surely, you shall rue it.'

Their counsel then attempted to say a few words in their defence. The Presbyterian minister was accused only of harbouring a rebel, and it was contended that he was away from his home on the day of the alleged crime.

'Bah, 'tis always the excuse of such hardened villains that they were somewhere else when the crime they are accused of was committed.'

'I have witnesses, my lord, if you will allow me to call them.'

'And what are they?' cried Jeffreys. 'Presbyterians, friends of this fellow, I'll warrant?'

'They are some of his own family, my lord.'

'As I said,' roared Jeffreys; 'his own family, snivelling Presbyterians all of them. Do you think we will believe a word of such wretches? do you think they will not lie to save yon old wolf? Gently, Mr Counsel, have a care how far you go, or you shall find we have a medicine for lawyers who

practise too sharply ;' and, spite of all that counsel could say, he would not let witnesses be called.

Another prisoner was accused of having sold a horse to an officer of Monmouth after Sedgemoor, thus enabling the man to escape from a party of dragoons who were chasing him. The man pleaded that he did not know the officer was a fugitive from justice, that he had not sold the horse, but that the officer had thrown him a couple of guineas as he galloped off.

'A likely tale,' cried Jeffreys. 'Knave, do you think to make me swallow your lies? Out upon such villainy.'

A witness who had seen the whole business was called, but he was so terrified at Judge Jeffreys' looks that he stammered and stumbled, when a second witness took his place, who swore to seeing the officer throw the guineas to the prisoner.

Counsel then appealed to Jeffreys, who savagely cried, 'The prisoner stands convicted out of his own mouth. He admits receiving two guineas in payment for the horse. Two or a hundred is all the same; he sold it, and that is enough. Was ever such jobbery heard of before?'

Another man, who had a squint, was accused of being at Sedgemoor. He declared he was at work more than ten miles away on the morning of the rout; but Jeffreys cried him down.

'Liar is written all over your face of brass,' he cried. 'A man with a squint, and tell the truth; faugh! who ever heard of such a thing?'

And so the mockery of a trial went on, the prisoners being raved at and browbeaten, the witnesses intimidated and frightened, the counsel insulted and

contradicted, till one of the Crown lawyers, a thin hatchet-faced man, whose skin was like parchment, and whose face would have looked more in its place in the dock, jumped up and said with a sneer, 'I think, my lord, we need not go further with these cases, as the witnesses are clearly all perjuring themselves; the prisoners have not a leg to stand on. Treason is amply proved against them.'

'I agree with you, Mr Symes, I quite agree,' said Jeffreys; then turning to the jury, 'What say you, gentlemen, guilty or not guilty?'

Thus appealed to, the jury looked a little startled, and put their heads together to consult, when Jeffreys left the court.

He was away about ten minutes, and when he returned his face was a little redder and his wig yet more awry.

'What, still chattering?' he cried, as he looked at the jury. 'Come, what is your verdict?'

'If it please your lordship'—— began the foreman.

But Jeffreys interrupted him. 'It does not please my lordship to be kept waiting while a lot of calves' heads chatter over what is as plain as a pikestaff. What is your verdict?'

'We are not decided as to some of the charges being proved.'

'Lord, Lord, was ever such perverseness?' cried Jeffreys, rolling up his eyes. 'Here you have heard all the evidence, evidence that would convince me the wretches were guilty were they my own brothers, and you have doubts about this and that. Look at the prisoners' faces, gentlemen of the jury; look at their savage mouths and fierce eyes. I tell you they stink of treason—stink of treason,' he repeated.

The jury, all thoroughly unprincipled adherents of the Court party, and carefully picked from amongst those known to be bitter against Monmouth's followers, again consulted, while Jeffreys sat glowering about like some wild beast.

Presently he burst out again: 'Gentlemen, gentlemen,' he cried, 'have a care; you are hindering the cause of justice. You are expected faithfully to serve your king, the kindest, most indulgent of kings, and here you waste half-an-hour deciding a question that is patent to any one. Let me warn you that every night his gracious Majesty has an account of the day's proceedings sent to him, a very particular account, and, as I sit on this seat, I will not fail to mention your obstinacy. Beware how you vex the king, my masters; beware!'

Thus threatened, the foreman of the jury stood up.

'Have you agreed?' asked Jeffreys.

'We have, my lord.'

The clerk called the prisoners by name, and each held up his hand. Then he said to the jury, 'Gentlemen of the jury, do you find these men guilty or not guilty?'

'We find them guilty, my lord,' replied the foreman, but in so low a tone that it could hardly be heard.

Jeffreys, however, heard it and looked triumphantly round.

'Guilty—ay, guilty,' he gloated, and a barbarous pleasure grinned from his brutal soul through his bloodshot eyes. 'Guilty as Monmouth himself was—guilty as Judas Iscariot. But, I'll warrant ye, we have a cure for such guilt; ye shall not offend again;

you shall never have another chance of rebelling against the kindest of princes, the best of kings. Oh, ye generation of vipers! the sentence of this court is that ye be taken hence unto the place from whence ye came, and from thence be dragged upon hurdles unto the place of execution. There you shall be hanged by the neck, but shall be cut down alive, your bowels torn out, and burnt before your faces, your limbs hacked from your body, and your heads chopped off, and parts of your rebellious carcasses shall be placed on every parish church in the county as a warning to other wrong-doers.'

As Jeffreys proceeded with the inhuman speech, his voice rose higher and higher, his eyes rolled, and he appeared like a man intoxicated, as indeed he was—intoxicated with the lust of blood.

The wretched prisoners, with pallid faces, stared, some at each other, some straight in front of them, while a dead silence reigned in the court, till it was suddenly broken by a peal of laughter, horrible, fiend-like laughter, which came from the judge himself, who roared till the tears ran down his face, as though at some exquisite joke.

Suddenly he ceased, and recommenced speaking.

'His gracious Majesty,' he said, 'before I left London, gave me authority, when I saw fit, to have these executions carried out at once, on the very day of sentence, and this right I now exercise. I appoint this afternoon for the executions, and let the sheriffs see to it that the sentence is carried out. What time you have you can devote to praying, though I doubt whether the prayers of such abandoned villains will avail anything.'

At the conclusion of this speech a cry of horror, of

loathing, of detestation, went up from the crowd in the court, upon which Jeffreys, while the prisoners were hurried away, sprang from his seat, glowered round, waved his arms, and hurled at the crowd threats of committing them all for contempt of court.

'Verily, have we fallen upon a very hotbed of rebellion,' he roared; 'but I'll purge it, I'll purge it! With God's help I'll give you such a scourging that you shall remember this circuit of 1685 as long as you live. Another sound, and I'll clear the court.'

Such was the terror this monster inspired that several men, bold, fearless fellows who had faced death in various forms, fainted away, and had to be carried out, while many others took the opportunity to escape from the court. Amongst these was Aubrey, who felt he could no longer stay in that terrible presence. He, however, remained outside, and during the day, through the open windows, the voice of Jeffreys, bellowing and roaring, browbeating and insulting, every now and then interspersed with his maniac laughter, was heard. Verily he was in his element, and the people who waited for news, as more and more of the terrified spectators came out, listened with bated breath and blanched faces to the tales of the terrible doings within.

During that day twenty-nine persons went through the farce of a trial, and all without exception were condemned to die at once.

Some of the neighbouring gentry, however, struck with horror at these inhuman proceedings, in a body petitioned Jeffreys that the condemned men might have at least a few hours in which to prepare for their fate. This Jeffreys refused; but it was found that there would not be time before dark to execute

so large a number of people with all the barbarities enjoined, and so the order was rescinded.

The next day, being Sunday, an execution was not possible. Men in Dorchester walked about with noiseless tread and bated breath; they looked at one another with blanched faces, for the terror of Jeffreys was upon them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW AUBREY EXECUTED HIS MISSION.

ON the Sunday evening Aubrey went to church. As he walked to his inn afterwards he concluded that nothing short of a miracle could save the Hewlings. He was wondering when Mr Kiffin's messenger would arrive, and what was the power the old gentleman said he possessed over Jeffreys.

On his return to his lodgings he found a stranger awaiting him.

The man had a letter for Aubrey, and two heavy leathern bags, which he deposited on the table. These bags contained the money, and the letter was full of instructions and exhortations from old Mr Kiffin to spare no effort to save his grandsons.

The result of this was that soon after seven o'clock the next morning Aubrey set out to call on the degraded judge.

Here, however, he was beset by difficulties. Guards were set before the house in which Jeffreys was lodged, and they handled strangers very roughly. The Lord Chief-Justice was more difficult to approach than the king himself.

Aubrey was asked his name, but for very good reasons he did not care to give it, neither could he say, in answer to what his business was, that he was a friend come on behalf of the Hewlings.

He insisted that his business was private, with Jeffreys himself, on which the sergeant of musketeers, with a rough laugh, said, 'Ay, friend, a business

you wear at your left side, eh—forty inches of good Spanish steel? Zounds, man, there are many who would like such private business with his lordship; but get you gone, or you'll find yourself with the other gallows-birds.'

'I tell you I want speech with him,' persisted Aubrey.

'Then you are the first of your kidney who ever did; a lick with the rough side of his tongue is all you're likely to get,' at which both the sergeant and the sentry standing by laughed heartily.

''Tis but right that you should be particular about your duty,' said Aubrey, 'as that should be a soldier's first care; but if you are of opinion that I intend harm to the Lord Chief-Justice, why, I am willing to leave my sword with you, and you can come with me, so that if I offer violence you can use your weapon against me.'

'Shoot me, but that's a fair offer,' replied the sergeant; 'only I cannot go farther into the house than the hall; but I can tell Balch your business.'

Seeing a chance of obtaining his end, Aubrey slipped a guinea into the sergeant's hand, on which that worthy became more amenable, and the two held a short whispered conversation. The result of this was that Aubrey handed his sword to the soldier, and was then conducted to the hall, where Balch, the personal attendant of Jeffreys, was called.

This man, a beetle-browed, muscular-looking, red-haired man, whose looks were almost as repulsive as his master's, inquired Aubrey's business.

''Tis of a private nature and is for his lordship's own ear,' replied Aubrey, slipping a guinea into this fellow's palm also.

Balch grinned ominously.

'Maybe you'll wish you had chosen some other time for your visit,' he said; 'but follow me.'

Jeffreys was asleep, and no one dared wake him, so Aubrey waited. Eight o'clock, the time he was due in the court, arrived, but still he remained in a dead sleep consequent on his previous night's debauch.

At last his servant ventured to rouse him, and even where Aubrey was, his flogging tongue could be heard.

The man with the red hair approached Aubrey.

'My lord will see you in his dressing-room,' he said. 'But let your words be few, for he is in haste.'

In another minute Aubrey found himself in Jeffreys' presence. The judge's face was spotted and bloated, his eyes were baggy, and his hands shook as he tied the lace cravat round his neck.

'Your name and business?' he demanded hoarsely as Aubrey entered.

'I come from Richard Kiffin, who prays you deal leniently with his grandsons, the two Hewlings.'

'What, old Kiffin of London! dare he attempt to tamper with the law? He shall answer for this; those City merchants want checking a little, on my word. Why should his cubs be treated differently from the other rogues?'

'He sends you this letter, and bade me say three thousand pounds should be yours if you favour him in this matter,' said Aubrey, lowering his voice.

A look of greed crossed the judge's bloated face, and after reading the letter he turned his little eyes round to see that they were alone.

'What is three thousand to old Kiffin?' he said. 'He is as rich as Croesus; but to attempt to buy justice, who dares propose it?'

'He bade me also say that if you thwarted him in this he would use the knowledge he has, and would raise such a storm that even you could not quiet.'

The look of demoniacal fury which crossed Jeffreys' face defies description. He mastered himself by an effort, however, and said, 'Oh Kiffin, Kiffin, would you try grips with me?'

Then he turned to Aubrey and regarded him with a stare as though trying to impress his features on his memory.

'Mr Kiffin has a good servant in you,' he said. 'Have you this money with you?'

'No.'

'Bring it to-night then, and I will see what I can do, though I make no promise—no promise. These Hewlings must apparently be treated as the others, and may be condemned; but I shall make recommendations to his Majesty. He will be merciful—merciful. Many will be spared.'

Aubrey turned to go.

'See to it,' said Jeffreys, 'that the money is handed to Balch to-night;' and having finished his toilet and drunk a huge glass of wine, he went to his coach, which, with the dragoons round it, waited outside.

That night Aubrey took the two bags of money round to Jeffreys' lodgings; then, his mind full of the horrors that were being enacted in Dorchester, he went to bed, but such horrible dreams haunted him that as soon as it was light he rose, hot and feverish.

It was known that Jeffreys was going on the morrow to Exeter; it was, therefore, certain that William Hewling would be tried that day.

Aubrey went early to the court, and among the first batch of prisoners brought in was William

Hewling. He soon saw Aubrey and waved his hand. He appeared quite calm and even cheerful, though signs of his close and strict confinement showed upon him.

Eleven men who had pleaded not guilty stood in the dock, amongst them being an old man with a white beard, and one, conspicuous by his great height, towering a head above the rest.

Jeffreys again kept the court waiting almost an hour. As he took his seat his face showed that the previous night's debauch had been no light one, and his bloodshot eyes were almost closed, but his cruel mouth was shut with savage determination.

The names of the prisoners were called, and on hearing William Hewling's name Jeffreys said, 'Ah, William Hewling, so you are here! You come of a traitorous stock. You have an old grandfather in London, a great rogue, who deserves hanging as much as any man among you.'

William Hewling made no reply; and Jeffreys, casting his eye over the prisoners, noticed Miles Townley among them.

'We have a giant here,' he cried, 'a son of Anak. The hangman shall have orders to provide an extra strong rope for him. Push the fellow forward, officer, that we may see his brazen face.'

Miles Townley came forward, and fixing his eyes on Jeffreys said, 'Ay, look upon me, the last of my family. A father killed at Sedgemoor and a brother butchered by Kirke's lambs. But to thy hangman's work, thou bloated toad! pronounce the sentence, and let us get away from the sound of thy scurrilous tongue.'

At this speech Jeffreys grew purple with rage.

He stormed and raged, and literally foamed at the mouth.

'Ay, you shall be served quickly, I warrant you,' he cried. 'You shall join your relatives. I see a halter already round your neck, round all your necks.'

The counsel, dreading that the defiant spirit of the prisoners might provoke Jeffreys to some unparalleled outburst of violence, hastened to call what witnesses could be prevailed upon to appear; but these were bullied into silence one after another.

The old man with the white beard declared he had nothing to do with the rebellion, and knew nothing about Sedgemoor till three days after the fight. He lived near Frome, and had been arrested by some of Kirke's men because he had knocked down one of them who had offered an insult to his granddaughter.

'You admit having struck one of the king's soldiers?' said Jeffreys.

'Ay, and would again,' said the undaunted old man. 'May the punishment of Heaven fall upon him who loosed such fiends upon an innocent people.'

'Innocent, innocent, ay, you are all innocent. Do you think to impose upon me with your cock-and-bull story. Bah! 'tis a lie. I can smell a lie before 'tis uttered; but, you old rogue, all the lies in the world will not save you.'

'My conscience would not allow me to tell a lie to save the life of my own son,' replied the old man with a simple dignity that was lost on Jeffreys.

'Conscience!' he jeered; 'if your conscience is as long as your beard you may well swear anything.'

'My lord!' replied the prisoner, looking fixedly at the judge's shaven face, 'if you go about to measure consciences by beards, your lordship has none.'

'Well answered,' cried a deep voice from the body of the court, and the silence that followed was presently broken by a tall, powerful man pressing forward.

'I am here to swear to the truth of what the prisoner says.'

The man was a sunburnt, weather-beaten fellow in a leathern doublet, and looked like a sailor. He gazed about him, when Jeffreys in harsh tones cried, 'Now, you fellow in the leathern doublet, pray how much had you for swearing?'

'Truly, sir,' replied the man, 'if you had no more for lying than I had for swearing you might have a leathern doublet as well as I.'

At this Jeffreys broke into more violent vituperation.

'Am I here to bandy words with every filthy jack-pudding?' he roared. 'Lord preserve us, what have we come to! Say what you have to and begone, or I will have the hangman lay his whip about your shoulders.'

'Little have I to say beyond that the prisoner is my father, and I saw what he has stated happen. I am a seafaring man, having a spell ashore, and my old father never told a lie in his life.'

'Then he is the better prepared for his end,' said Jeffreys brutally. 'He is guilty, on his own showing, of the crime he is charged with.'

'Have a care,' said the sailor, in warning tones. 'If he dies his blood is on your head, and I tell you he shall not be unavenged. No man ever made an enemy of Seth Tallet who did not rue it, and though you were twenty times Chief-Justice I would reach you. If my father dies a violent death, you die a violent death too!'

'Officer, have that man arrested!' cried Jeffreys, turning pale; 'he threatens me in my own court!'

And though Seth Tallet resisted, he was seized and borne away.

The mockery of a trial went on, the jury taking so little notice that they chatted amongst themselves while the witnesses were examined; the counsel yawned, and the soldiers dozed. Every now and then the jury were asked for their verdict, which was always the same—guilty!—and then Jeffreys pronounced sentence, and another batch was brought in.

William Hewling, old Tallet, and the rest, were all condemned, and Aubrey, with mixed feelings, left the court.

Would Jeffreys obtain a reprieve? That was the question he asked himself. It was expected that many must be reprieved, for no less than two hundred and ninety-two had been sentenced to death, and that they would be all executed no one for a moment believed, though already the mangled remains of forty victims were putrefying in the air as an earnest of what was to follow.

CHAPTER XXV.

OF THE END OF THE REBELLION.

ON the evening of the day on which William Hewling was condemned Aubrey was walking back to his lodging, his mind full of the events happening round him. The night was inclined to be wet, and dark clouds scurried across the face of the moon. Once a gust of wind almost blew off his hat, but he saved it by turning quickly and catching it with his hand. As he did so, he noticed three men, with heads bent forward and heavy bludgeons in their hands, following close upon his heels.

In an instant Aubrey's hand was on his sword-hilt, and he stopped, when those following did likewise, and appeared to be debating among themselves.

Suddenly, one of the men sprang forward and aimed a heavy blow with a bludgeon at Aubrey's head, which he just managed to avoid by jumping aside, though the blow fell on his shoulder, and for a moment staggered him. Seeing this, as Aubrey drew his sword, the other two men closed in.

Though his left arm was numbed by the force of the blow he had received, Aubrey made good use of his right, and kept his assailants at bay for a few moments, inflicting a gash on one ruffian's wrist that made him fall back with a howl. The shorter of the two who remained then hurled his club at Aubrey, and relying on the accuracy of his aim rushed in to seize his man.

The club, however, instead of catching Aubrey on

the head, struck his neck, and as the man who had hurled it ran in, Aubrey received him on the point of his sword, which passed completely through his body.

At this, the other two men took to their heels and bolted; then Aubrey stooped to examine the man he had run through the body, and on seeing his features found his suspicions confirmed. The insensible ruffian was the Chief-Justice's man Balch!

The noise of doors being opened aroused Aubrey to a sense of his danger. Some of the townspeople, alarmed by the noise, were coming out to see what was the matter, and to be detained till the affair was inquired into might prove awkward; so Aubrey, knowing that those who came upon the scene would look to the wounded man's hurts, darted up a side street, and without further mishap gained his lodgings.

Before dawn he left Dorchester for Taunton.

Here over eleven hundred prisoners were awaiting their mockery of a trial; they were brought up in batches, condemned, and at once executed by dozens. Jeffreys' spirits seemed to rise higher and higher as the work went on; he shouted, laughed and joked, till many thought his reason had left him.

In a short time over two hundred and thirty poor wretches were hanged, drawn, and quartered, the executions taking place in thirty-six towns. There was no longer any semblance of a trial, and Benjamin Hewling was condemned with the rest but was not amongst those who were ordered for instant execution.

After Benjamin had been condemned, Aubrey learnt that William Hewling and several others were to be taken next day to Lyme, to be executed there.

Leave was given to the friends to say good-bye to

those condemned, so Aubrey returned to Dorchester, where he gained admission to the prison.

He found William Hewling engaged in writing a farewell letter to his mother. Jumping up as his friend entered, he greeted him warmly.

'Dear friend,' he said, with his charming smile, 'you can never be repaid for all you have done for me and my brother. I do not regret what has happened, and if it was to do again I should be ready to do my part. Standing as I do on the brink of the grave, I see that there are stormy times in store for our dear country, but the right will prevail. Our lives will not have been given in vain, and tyranny and persecution will meet with the fate they deserve.'

Aubrey went to Lyme to see the last of his friend, whom he attended to the scaffold in the morning, and stood close to him while he addressed his last few gentle words to the crowd.

He forgave all his enemies, he said, even Jeffreys, who had condemned so many innocent men, and he prayed for brighter days for England. Then he shook Aubrey warmly by the hand, and said, 'If ever you see Ben again, give him my love. My last thought will be of my dear sister and mother; and now, kindest and truest of friends, adieu, and may God prosper and preserve you! By a curious chance, to-day is my nineteenth birthday, and I declare I never went to a merrymaking in all my life with such joy as I now go to my death and to Him who made me.'

With these words he mounted the ladder, and in less than a minute was dead. When he was cut down it was noticed by those near that his handsome face still wore a smile.

The tears rolled down Aubrey's cheeks as he gazed on the piteous spectacle, and hearing a sympathetic sniff, he turned, and to his surprise saw his old friend the sergeant who had been on guard outside Jeffreys' lodgings in Dorchester wipe a tear from his eye.

'Gadzooks, comrade,' he cried in husky tones, 'I never want to see another such scene as that; if my Lord Chief-Justice had been here himself he could never have let the poor lad die.'

Aubrey had obtained permission for the body of William Hewling to be handed over to him, and with the aid of the very fisherman whose boat he had borrowed when he effected the escape of Fletcher of Saltoun the body was conveyed to the church, where it was exposed in a handsome coffin, which was completely covered with flowers. That evening, twenty young maidens of Lyme bore poor William Hewling to his grave under a sycamore-tree in Lyme churchyard.

Two days later Benjamin Hewling was executed at Taunton meeting his fate with the same heroic courage as Will; and though not possessing that happy, lovable disposition that endeared William to every one, Benjamin's graver and quieter manner won him the respect of enemies as well as of friends.

Aubrey's business in the West having ended so tragically there was nothing further to keep him there, so he started on his return to London to tell Mr Kiffin the sad news. He had got as far as Reading, when, as he was eating his evening meal, he got into conversation with a Bristol merchant who was travelling to London. He soon learnt that the man was none other than Mr Kiffin's Bristol corres-

pondent ; so telling him the whole of the sad tale, he arranged with him to carry the news to the dotting grandfather, for he dreaded the task of inflicting the pain himself.*

When Aubrey retired to bed that night he lay for some time awake, turning over in his mind what would be the best course for him to pursue. Nothing but bad fortune seemed to dog him, and in his present predicament he felt that the advice of his father would be of inestimable value. He therefore determined to visit his home secretly ; and having decided this, the next morning he bade the merchant adieu and struck northwards towards St Albans, which he intended reaching by night.

* Note G, ' Mr Kiffin and the Hewlings,' page 321.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW AUBREY SPENT A FEW DAYS AT HOME.

THERE was no need for haste, so Aubrey rode easily. As it was getting towards afternoon he pulled up at an inn for a glass of ale and a crust of bread and cheese.

While he was eating, he noticed that two well-armed men had entered and had also called for refreshments. They were sturdy fellows, who looked as if they would not be above crying 'Stand !' on the king's highway on a moonless night. They had jogged along behind Aubrey for a considerable way, and he did not care much for their looks.

Over their beer one looked towards Aubrey, and raising his earthenware cup, said, 'I give you good-day, sir, and will pledge you the king's health.'

Aubrey raised his glass and responded quietly. Then the second man cried, 'You drink with a bad grace, my master; mayhap there are some other healths you would rather drink ?'

'One of them would not be yours,' replied Aubrey, looking straight at the fellow, who seemed inclined to bluster, had not his companion plucked him by the sleeve and bade him be quiet.

'My comr 'e is a quick-tempered but a loyal man,' he said to Aubrey, trying hard to get into conversation with him; but Aubrey would not be drawn, and, seeing the strangers were apparently in no hurry to depart, he paid his score, and mounting, rode off.

He went at a good pace for a mile or so, when, having reached the top of a long ascent, he turned in his saddle, and then saw the two men spurring rapidly along in his tracks. This seemed very much as though he were being followed, so he determined to put his trackers off the scent.

Galloping along for some half-mile, he came to a small thicket by the roadside, and dismounting, led his horse in and was soon concealed from sight. He looked to the priming of his long horse-pistols, and loosening his sword, felt ready to defend himself if need arose. It was then getting dark, and things could not be distinguished very far ahead.

Soon the two came pricking along, and Aubrey, holding his horse's muzzle with one hand, had a pistol in readiness in the other.

Just as the riders got opposite to him, one said, 'Ride not so recklessly, Tom. The gallant will see us and take the alarm.'

'He may not be the bird we want.'

'And he may, he answers well to the description, and he is on the very road we were told to watch. We shall earn those gold pieces, Tom, if you don't make a fool of yourself.'

What the other replied Aubrey could not hear as they had got too far away; but he had heard enough to know they were following him, and it was exceedingly probable that they had done so all the way from Taunton. At once a suspicion seized Aubrey that the men were employed by Jeffreys, who was well known to be an implacable enemy, and who also had reason to fear that Aubrey and Mr Kiffin together might make awkward accusations about the bribe he had accepted. Once Aubrey got into the

clutches of his enemies nothing would be easier than to silence him for ever, for his share in the late disturbances would be quite enough to warrant his execution, so he proceeded with the greatest caution.

He waited until dusk before he went on, then he moved at a slow pace, carefully avoiding every traveller he met, and pulling his hat down so that those he did pass would certainly never recognise him had they known him ever so well in the old days.

His heart beat high with pleasurable excitement as he reached his father's house, and dismounting, he paused a moment to consider how he should get in without letting any of the servants know. He decided to scale the garden wall, and standing on his saddle, easily got to the top; when, just as he was about to drop on the other side, he heard a crackling sound as of some one moving in the hedge opposite.

Instantly he jumped down again, and drawing his sword, looked about in the bushes. The light, however, was so bad that he could distinguish nothing. He paused for a moment, when he thought he heard footsteps a little farther along; but having arrived at that spot all was again silent.

While he stood hesitating he heard the sound of a galloping horse some distance away, and Aubrey was convinced in his mind that whoever it was had got clear away. This fact caused him considerable uneasiness; but he determined that, having come so far, he would see his parents, if only for a few hours.

Again the wall was scaled, the park was crossed, and entering the old house by the garden door he made his way to the best sitting-room, where, quietly opening the door, he saw his mother seated doing

some fancy work by the light of a couple of candles, while Sir Nigel sat at the other side of the table reading a parchment document which lay spread out before him.

Over the joy of that meeting we will draw a veil. Sir Nigel almost shook Aubrey's hand off, while his mother, as only a mother can, embraced him and wept tears of joy upon his shoulder.

The first transports of affection over, Aubrey explained his position, to the difficulty of which Sir Nigel was at once alive.

'Remain with your mother,' he said. 'I will go and fetch in your horse. Do not on any account leave the room, and I will arrange with old Giles that none come near. You are in more danger here than you think; but I will see the house torn stone from stone before any one shall harm you.'

While Sir Nigel was away, Aubrey's mother told him that two search parties from Whitehall had come down, armed with a warrant for the arrest of Aubrey Berkeley, known to be an aider and abetter of the king's most wicked enemies, and to have been in arms with Monmouth in the late rebellion.

When Sir Nigel returned, Aubrey related how he had made an enemy of Jermyn, and how he had been drawn into the western rebellion quite against his will.

'Heaven knows, I never thought son of mine would draw sword against a Stuart king of England,' said Sir Nigel, 'nor can I hold you blameless for so doing. Yet such is the bloodthirsty fury with which all are punished who fall into the hands of the king's party that I will protect you as long as I can hold a sword. But you will not long be

safe here; you are named as a rebel, and I could not protect you. You must away to Holland, there to abide till these troublous times be over. There is grave discontent all about the country, and I fear the troubles of '40 will be repeated. James is driving the country to such lengths that he will lose all that his brother gained and his murdered father died for.'

During the next two days Aubrey enjoyed a period of tranquillity that seemed delightful after the troubled times he had passed through, and he felt that if he could only settle down comfortably in the old house he would never again want to leave it.

His presence at Blackwater was known only to a couple of old and trusted domestics, and Sir Nigel was busy making secret preparations for his son to leave for Holland.

On the second evening, while the little family were sitting at supper, the sound of a horse being rapidly ridden up the gravelled drive was heard, then old Giles burst into the room, agitation written on his face.

'Young Master Tresham has ridden in haste from London,' he began; when further speech was cut short by the entrance of Ralph himself, his face wet with perspiration, his clothes covered with dust.

After a hasty salute to Sir Nigel and his lady, he advanced to Aubrey, and in low tones said, 'To horse and away! Your liberty, your very life, is in instant danger. I have ridden like the wind from Whitehall, but I hardly expected to be in time. Jermyn has somehow learnt that you are here, and a party of dragoons are on their way to arrest you!'

These bluntly delivered words threw the listeners into a state of excitement.

'My son, my son!' cried Lady Berkeley, pale to the lips as she clung to Aubrey.

'I must be off at once,' said Aubrey. 'As I suspected, 'twas a spy who saw me scale the wall the night I arrived. I fervently trust your having sheltered me will not bring trouble upon you, father.'

'In spite of all the trouble in the world, I will defend you,' cried the old cavalier determinedly. 'I have not yet forgotten how to handle a weapon. I will see that the gates are locked and the doors bolted; we can then hold the house against a troop long enough for you to effect an escape, Aubrey.'

'No, I will not have you inculcate yourself,' said Aubrey; but the old cavalier had already left the room.

'Hasten, lad,' cried Ralph; 'get what you want into a valise, and be off; not a moment must be lost.'

'Bear me a hand, Ralph, and in ten minutes I am ready.'

While the two were busy, Ralph related how he had come to hear of the affair.

'I was drinking in the Whitehall guard-room with Cornet North of Keen's Dragoons this afternoon,' he said, 'and he told me he was riding to St Albans, and was anathematising his hard luck, for he had promised some lady about the Court to attend a masque to-night. However, he was specially named for the duty, which was to arrest a person charged with treason who had been discovered in hiding at his father's house. Lord Chief-Justice Jeffreys is behind the matter, and has caused the arrest, North telling me the person to be arrested was known to

have been on friendly terms with the late Duke of Monmouth, and was suspected of being able to give evidence against Lord Grey. It never occurred to me that it might be you till North said, "You come from that part, Tresham; do you know a place called Blackwater?" I can tell you my heart was in my mouth. I directed him full five miles out of his way, and as soon as I was free set out, though North had a good hour's start. I have ridden here like the wind and must now be off, for to be found here would land me in an awkward fix.'

'We will ride together,' said Aubrey; and they were making their way to the stables when the tramp of horses and the sound of voices was heard outside, and Sir Nigel came running towards them with his rapier in his hand.

'Too late!' he cried. 'The dragoons are already here; they must have passed the gate almost on your heels, Ralph.'

'North is a cautious rogue,' said Ralph; 'he must have asked his way.'

A loud banging at the front door was now heard, and a voice demanded admittance in the king's name.

The female servants screamed and huddled together in the upper rooms. The three men-servants had gathered round Sir Nigel, and with set faces awaited whatever orders they might receive. They had all armed themselves with weapons which had lain by for many a year, and it was clear all were ready to resist king or law for Sir Nigel and Master Aubrey.

'We must cut a way through the dragoons and get to the stables,' said Sir Nigel, 'then I and the

men will cover your retreat while you two mount and fly.'

'We should be cut down before we made the gates,' replied Aubrey. 'No, that will not do; besides, I will not have you strike a blow on my behalf. The king is hard as flint, and would punish you as heavily for aiding a rebel as me for being one. I have a better plan. Ralph and I will slip out by the garden door, when we can easily get round amongst the trees without being seen, and so gain the stables. All the soldiers are close to the house, and with luck we shall be able to get round to the back of the stables, when we can jump the broken wall by the summer-house, which is there not more than four feet high. I have done it many a time on your old hunter.'

'Good boy, a splendid idea! Off at once, and I will hold these fellows in parley the while. When you have got out of the house I will open the door and let the soldiers in; then while they are searching you can be off. Send Giles to me with word when you leave the house.'

Sir Nigel went down to the massive front door, and banging on the inside, cried out, 'Who knocks so loudly without?'

'An officer bearing the king's warrant,' came the reply.

'For what? I am a loyal subject of his Majesty, and was of his brother and his father before him.'

'Ay, old fox; but you have a rebellious cub; 'tis him we seek!'

'My son left home six months ago.'

'And returned two days ago. Open, I say, or, 'sblood, we will stave in the panels!'

'I do not care to let a lawless soldiery loose in my house. What warrant have I for your good behaviour?'

'Sdeath man, we will give you warrant enough,' and with the butt-ends of their muskets the dragoons rained blows upon the door.

Sir Nigel waited anxiously for news that Aubrey had got away; but Giles did not return, and the minutes passed slowly.

'Here, men,' cried North fiercely, 'send a dozen bullets through the lock, and if that does not do it lay a mine of powder against the door and fire it. We will burn the warren down about the old fox's ears.'

The reports of a dozen muskets rang out, and a smell of powder pervaded the house.

Meanwhile, Aubrey and Ralph had gone to the garden door only to find half-a-dozen dragoons outside, hammering at it. Escape that way was out of the question.

'We cannot get out through the windows,' said Ralph; 'every one is barred.'

'I have another plan,' explained Aubrey. 'My own bedroom looks out on to the north side of the house. We can drop from that into a tree close against the wall and gain the ground that way.'

Away they raced, and, the bedroom gained, Aubrey threw up the window. The descent was comparatively easy, and the two were soon on the ground. They immediately ran for the shadow of the trees just as the reports of the muskets in front of the house rang out.

'Heavens! what is that?' cried Aubrey, in fear for his father.

'Come,' said Ralph, 'we cannot stay now.'

They moved round to their left, passed the back of the house, where several dragoons were still hammering at the garden door, went right through the kitchen garden, past the servants' quarters, and reached the stables safely just as Sir Nigel opened the front door and the angry dragoons, cursing his delay, rushed into the house.

Ralph's steed was standing saddled just as it had been led into the stable. In the dark, Aubrey, with feverish haste, saddled his horse, and in three minutes was ready. Cornet North, relying on surprising those within the house, had not thought of securing the horses in the stable, never dreaming his man would be able to leave the house.

Leading their horses, Aubrey and Ralph crept forth round the back of the stables, through a shrubbery, leaving the kitchen garden on their right, and, gaining the old summer-house which stood in a corner of the grounds, mounted.

Just as Aubrey was putting his horse at the wall a report rang out, and a ball flattened itself against the bricks in front of him. It was a bright, moonlight night, and one of the dragoons, from an upper room of the house—for they were searching high and low—seeing two men escaping, fired at them on chance. The report brought several companions to the dragoon's side, and more shots were fired.

'Jump, men, jump!' cried Aubrey to Ralph, determined to take the post of danger.

Ralph cleared the low wall, Aubrey followed, and then turning to their left they had to ride along the south wall of the garden till they reached the hedge dividing it from the road.

Several dragoons, dashing from the house, flung themselves into their saddles, and galloping down the drive, turned to their right along the road to try and cut the fugitives off. Ralph had already reached the road, and turning London-wards, was galloping on; but Aubrey's horse jumped the hedge just as three dragoons arrived exactly opposite him in the road. Aubrey's was a splendid animal, and it took the jump well; as it landed in the road its chest caught the flank of one of the dragoons' horses with such force that both horse and rider went sprawling in the ditch beside the road. The other two dragoons swerved to right and left; and before they had time to think what Aubrey was going to do he had whipped out his sword, and spurring at the man on his right, with a blow on the head he cut him from his saddle. He then galloped after Ralph, while the third dragoon, drawing his pistol, sent a shot at Aubrey, which however went wide of the mark.

With loose reins and bent heads, Aubrey and Ralph galloped away, knowing their lives depended on their horses; and as they reached the top of the road, Aubrey, looking backwards, saw several dark figures behind them, and knew they were pursued.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOW AUBREY CROSSED THE SEA.

AUBREY could easily have outdistanced his pursuers, as his horse was quite fresh and bent to its work with keen enjoyment, covering the ground with long, powerful strides. Ralph's horse, however, was fagged, and could not keep up.

'You go on,' said Ralph; 'there is really no danger for me. If I fell into their hands I could make some excuse to satisfy North.'

'No; we will share the same fate, Ralph. Had it not been for you I should assuredly by now have been a prisoner.'

'I am still in your debt, for I owe you a life.'

Lapsing into silence, they hammered along, Aubrey noticing, as now and then he glanced behind him, that their pursuers still hung on. At Edgware the two turned into a lane which took them on to the North Road just below Barnet, down which road they went till they came to another lane, which Aubrey signed to his companion to take.

'It leads to a good road that will take us to Highgate,' he said, 'and I think we have for the present thrown our pursuers off the scent.'

All immediate danger being over, Aubrey and Ralph proceeded at a more leisurely pace till, without further adventure, they reached Highbury fields.

'Your road is easy to follow from here,' said Aubrey. 'For myself, I shall push on as far as Gravesend, where I shall hope to get a boat to take

me down-river. I will let you know, as soon as I can with safety, where I am, and then I pray you write and tell me how it fares with my people. Keep in touch with them, and if they should be in any trouble tell me, and at all costs I will return.'

Then with a hand-shake they parted, Aubrey going east towards the marshes, Ralph west towards the City.

Aubrey kept on till near midnight. He was in hopes of being able to obtain a passage at once from Gravesend, though he knew that all avenues of escape to Holland were jealously watched. His horse was beginning to show signs of fatigue, and he was wondering how much farther Gravesend was when he thought he heard sounds of hoof-beats behind him. He paused a moment, and was then quite sure; in fact, looking behind him, in the moonlight he saw a horseman riding at full speed towards him. The outline was exactly that of a dragoon, and Aubrey quickened his pace for five minutes, then looked back again, when he perceived that the distance between him and his pursuer, instead of increasing, had grown less. Aubrey used his spurs, and his horse made a spurt, but to no purpose; his pursuer got nearer and nearer, till Aubrey could distinguish the outline of the feathered hat, and thought he saw the glint of a pistol-barrel. He set his teeth as he drew a pistol from his holster. He had no intention, so near the end his journey, of being captured without a struggle. 'It's man against man,' he muttered, 'and I shall have the advantage of firing from the ground.'

A little farther on a sharp turn in the road hid the riders from one another. No sooner was Aubrey

round the corner than he slid from his horse, loaded and primed his pistol, and standing with his horse between him and his pursuer, rested his pistol-barrel on his saddle. Hardly had he done so when his pursuer came round the corner at full gallop.

'Halt!' cried Aubrey in loud tones; 'another step and I fire!'

The rider reined back his horse till its haunches almost touched the road, then with great dexterity he snatched a pistol from his holster, slid from the saddle on the off-side, and hastily pointing his weapon, pulled the trigger.

The flint fell on the steel, there was a spark, but no report followed; the priming had evidently been shaken out of the pan.

Before the rider had time to draw another pistol or his sword, Aubrey sprang forward and seizing him by the throat, pressed the muzzle of his pistol to his breast, exclaiming, 'Drop that weapon, or I'll send a bullet through your heart.'

'*Sapperment!* what is this?' cried the man with a foreign accent. 'I have been mistaken.'

Aubrey also lowered his weapon in surprise, for in the stranger he recognised the mysterious Dutchman with whom he had dined at Kiffin's house.

'It seems we have both made a slight mistake,' said Aubrey. 'For whom did you take me?'

'For a man I wanted much to have some words with,' said the Dutchman grimly; 'but you are not he. What do you make this way, riding so fast?'

'Truth to tell, I was making for Gravesend, where I hoped to get a boat that would take me down the river. England, alas! can be no home for me for some years to come I fear, if ever again.'

'Yet another refugee,' said the Dutchman, and he seemed to consider for a few moments; then he said, 'I have business in Gravesend; if you like we will ride together.'

Aubrey expressed his willingness, and in utter silence they rode into the town, pulling up at an old house fronting the river. Here the Dutchman dismounted, and after pulling a bell, whistled in a peculiar manner, when a little wicket in the door was opened and a few words were exchanged with a man inside. The door was opened, and Aubrey and the Dutchman entered.

Despite the lateness of the hour the house was well lit, though the wooden shutters concealed that fact from without. As they entered, a middle-aged man, dressed in blue cloth, and wearing a hanger, came towards them. The Dutchman and he exchanged a few words, when they passed into a room in which a substantial meal was ready laid.

'This is Master Berkeley, a young man I have met at Kiffin's,' said the Dutchman; 'and this is Captain Lusby, a very good friend of mine. And now, I am somewhat curious, Mr Berkeley, to know why you were in such a hurry this evening. So did a young man, much after your own build but riding on a black horse, pass you on the road?'

'I saw no such rider,' said Aubrey; 'and truth to tell, it behoves me to leave England as quickly as I can.'

'Ha,' said the Dutchman; and he and Captain Lusby exchanged meaning glances.

Presently the latter said, 'We might be able to be of some service to you, Mr Berkeley, if we knew all the circumstances of the case.'

Aubrey understood the hint, and outlined his adventures for the last few weeks.

'You do well to leave England for a while,' said the Dutchman. 'I know troublous times are before all who were in the West with your Duke of Monmouth.'

'Do you speak Dutch at all?' asked Captain Berkeley.

'Not a word.'

'H'm, a pity,' then he and the Dutchman talked in that Aubrey took to the Dutch. At the end of the conversation the Englishman, in English, 'Mr Berkeley, you are anxious to go to Holland, and I want a trusty messenger. Things have happened to-night that I must send news of to my friends. If you would consent to take a packet for me I can promise you a passage at once.'

'I shall be delighted.'

'There should be no danger; the only person on board who should the vessel be overtaken and be one of the king's vessels you drop the packet from the porthole of your cabin into the sea.'

Aubrey agreed, and then particulars were arranged. About two in the morning the three mounted and rode some miles along the lonely, swampy bank of the river. Arrived at a spot where the river made a sharp bend, the captain, taking a lantern from his saddle-bow, lit it, and made a signal with it.

Presently a boat was seen through the light mist being rowed ashore.

The captain remaining with the horses, the Dutchman and Aubrey got into the boat. They rowed

out to a small vessel named the *Circe*, whose sharp-cut prow and tapering masts seemed to imply that she was built for speed. They gained the deck, when the master came forward.

The Dutchman and he spoke aside for a few minutes, then turning to Aubrey the former said, 'This is the master, Captain Weyl; he will see to your comfort aboard.'

Captain Weyl growled out a welcome in broken English, and they descended to a snug cabin. Aubrey's companion gave him a packet tied with silk and sealed.

'There is, as you see, no address,' he said. 'On landing at Scheveningen go to the Golden Lion Inn. Stay there till a rider wearing an orange-coloured feather and an orange sash arrives. He will address you in English, for he is a Scotsman. When you see him, tie this piece of orange ribbon to the hilt of your rapier, as is the fashion with young gallants, when he will say, "Friend, do you come from over the sea?" to which you must answer, "Yes, from a land of storms." He will then ask you for the packet, which you can give him. I do not know whether you have any friends in Holland, but I myself shall be at The Hague in a few days, and may be able to serve you; meanwhile, here is a purse of money which will help to defray expenses.'

Aubrey thanked him warmly, and said he would accept the gold as a loan, for he was going into an unknown country and among strangers.

The Dutchman was then rowed ashore again, while Aubrey descended to his cabin.

In half-an-hour they were under way, and Aubrey,

tired out, turned into his bunk, where he was soon asleep, and did not wake till late next day.

The voyage was made and Scheveningen reached without any accident. Without any difficulty Aubrey found the 'Golden Lion,' where he put up.

He felt that it would be wiser not to leave the inn until he had met him of the orange sash; so, as his room commanded a view of the approach to the inn, he amused himself by sitting at the window and watching the people, an occupation which, seeing he was a stranger in the country, much interested him.

On the afternoon of the next day Aubrey saw a cavalier much more smartly dressed than the usual run of Dutchmen dismounting at the inn; hardly had he perceived the rider than he noticed he had an orange-coloured sash and a bow of the same colour on the hilt of his rapier. Aubrey at once tied the piece of ribbon he had on his own sword-hilt, then descended into the bar, where the stranger had called for a bottle of wine. Perceiving Aubrey, he raised his feathered hat and said, 'Good-day, friend, do you come from over the sea?'

'I do,' replied Aubrey, 'from a land of storms; but that does not prevent me recognising an old acquaintance. Are you not Mr Moinet?'

The stranger stared in surprise at Aubrey, who was sure of his man, and went on, 'Surely you haven't forgotten the days we spent together in Lyme.'

'Now I remember you,' replied Moinet, as he wrung Aubrey's hand. 'But you are the last man I expected to see here. I have not forgotten that I owe you a debt of gratitude for effecting the

escape of Fletcher of Saltoun, a very dear friend of mine. Perhaps I may be able to serve you here. If I can do so, command me. But how is it you are here. Come inside and let us tell each other all that has happened since last we met, for I presume you are satisfied that I am he whom you were to meet ?'

'Quite ;' and the two, going to a private room spent an hour exchanging confidences.

'Well,' said Moinet, when Aubrey had finished, 'that chance-meeting on the Gravesend road may prove a good thing for you, for I can give a pretty sure guess who the stranger was, and if I am right you have made a friend of one who is here a very influential person. However, we shall see later. Now if you will hand me over the packet you bear we will mount and ride to The Hague.'

So the two set off, and a very pleasant ride they had.

Moinet stood high in the favour of William Prince of Orange, and on the following day he took Aubrey to the palace and introduced him to the prince, telling how he had brought over some most important papers. The prince was very gracious, and bore Aubrey off to present him to his wife, the Princess Mary, daughter of James the Second.

The Princess of Orange, though she had been absent from England for many years, had a very warm place in her heart for her countrymen, and exiles from her native land were always most warmly welcomed. She asked him many questions as to the late lamentable rebellion and shed tears when he related how Monmouth had met his death. Before Aubrey left, the princess bade him come

again, and in a day or two he began to feel quite at home.

On the fourth day Mr Moinet took him to wait upon Count Dykvelt, who had just returned from England.

When the two were ushered into the count's presence they found him busy with several clerks, while he himself sat with a great quill behind his ear. He was dressed plainly in sober black, and looked up with a mild look at Aubrey, who, however, gave a start, for in the merchant-like man before him he recognised the stranger who had so nearly shot him on the Gravesend road.

Count Dykvelt, one of the cleverest politicians in Europe, seemed to enjoy Aubrey's embarrassment for a minute, then with a smile he shook the young man's hand. 'Mr Berkeley,' he said, 'forgive me for deceiving you; you did not suspect who I was, and it was an advantage that you did not, as you were able to serve my purpose better. I must ask you to forgive me also for so nearly shooting you, but you will run no such risks in Holland.'

Aubrey muttered some sort of thanks, and later Dykvelt took him to The Hague, where he spoke of him in very high terms to the Prince of Orange. Within a few days Aubrey was appointed to the household of the Princess Mary, and attached to the army of the prince for duty. He could not be given a commission, as under the regulations no British officers were allowed to draw pay in the Dutch army; but Aubrey was made an honorary member of a cavalry regiment, and was eligible for service should any need arise.

So it happened that in a week or two Aubrey

found he had at last fallen on his feet and had made powerful friends. He soon settled down, and was tolerably happy, being however disappointed in soon losing the companionship of Moinet, who, restless by nature, went off to join his friend Fletcher of Saltoun in fighting for the Hungarians against the Turks.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OF AUBREY'S RETURN TO ENGLAND.

SINCE Aubrey had looked his last upon his native land from the deck of the *Circe*, three succeeding summers had ripened their harvests and filled the granaries.

The third summer had waned into autumn, and it was on a wild and boisterous day in October that a horseman, muddy and travel-stained, drew rein before the Dolphin Inn at Whitstable. Entering a cosy chamber, he threw aside his sodden cloak, displaying beneath the scarlet coat of an officer in the army. Having warmed himself in front of the fire which blazed cheerily on the hearth, he ordered dinner, and after satisfying his hunger he engaged his host in conversation.

'Rough weather,' he said; 'too rough for any vessels to put in, I suppose?'

'Certainly, your honour.'

'Consequently you have no strange visitors.'

'No, sir; no, sir,' replied the host, giving a furtive look at the officer and edging towards the door, as though not liking the turn the conversation had taken.

This was not lost upon the officer, who said, 'There is no need to be alarmed, man. I'm not suspecting you of harbouring spies.'

'Your honour, your honour, the saints forfend,' began the landlord, holding up his hands in pious horror; but the officer stopped him.

'Listen, my good fellow. I don't suppose for a

moment you'd ask any one questions, whether they were spies, smugglers, rebels, or what not, providing they paid you, and you'd be quite right not to do so. But now I want some information, and I take it, if it's in your power, you've no objection to helping me. My name's Tresham, Cornet Tresham of his Majesty's Life Guards, and I'm here to meet a very old friend who is arriving from abroad. You understand ?'

'Ye-es, sir.'

'Now, have you seen aught of a stranger, tall, fair, and military-looking, either yesterday or to-day ?'

'No, sir ; no. No one at all, sir, on my word of honour as'——

'That is enough,' said Ralph, for he it was, now promoted to a cornetcy ; 'that is enough ; you will see such a gentleman when he does arrive. Should you see him before I do, tell him the man he seeks is here.'

'Yes, your honour.'

'Now, my cloak ; I will see what chance there is of a vessel being able to put in to-day.'

Ralph Tresham left the tavern and walked down to the pebble-strewn beach, on which the waves were dashing with great violence. Long he looked out over the gray-green water, then, turning, he walked along the beach, ever and anon glancing out to sea on the lookout for a sail.

Not one, however, was to be seen on the choppy waves, all the fishing craft, even, being hauled up high and dry upon the beach. The wind was blowing hard, and in half-an-hour Ralph returned to the 'Dolphin.'

Later in the afternoon he again went out, but with no better result than before. On his return to the 'Dolphin,' his attention was taken by two r who were sitting drinking, and talking to the la lord. It was evident from the mud-splashes on their cloaks and high riding-boots that they had ridden a considerable distance, and that recently too, for the mud was still wet. Both wore broad-brimmed hats partly concealing their faces. Altogether, judging by what could be seen of their features, and by their draggled feathers and tawdry finery, they looked suspiciously like Alsatian rufflers.

They were talking loudly as Ralph entered, but on one of them looking round and seeing him he slyly knocked the foot of his companion, and they instantly ceased speaking. With one quick glance at them, Ralph passed on to the private room he had engaged, and looking from the window, he presently saw the two men leave the house.

He noted well their appearance, and fell to wondering whether their arrival had anything to do with him, for though, since the day when he and Aubrey had parted, he had thriven and risen in his profession, he had made enemies, and he knew that every person about the king was more or less suspected, and that the Court swarmed with spies and informers.

James was at the height of his unpopularity, which dated from the Monmouth Rebellion. His reign was a continual struggle to force his religion upon the country and to debar Protestants from holding any office. The acquittal of the seven bishops was the rude awakening of James to the fact that he had the country against him, and the open hostility with which the news of the birth of a

son, thus insuring a Catholic succession, was received, pointed to the very gravest disaffection.

People talked openly of the coming of the Prince of Orange to restore the Protestant religion and to defend the liberties of the people against their lawful king. The air was full of the talk of plots, every man saw in every other a possible spy, revolutionary broadsheets were scattered about, and no servant of the king felt secure.

Ralph sat with crossed legs, looking into the fire, and he thought gloomily of all these things; then his thoughts flew to Aubrey, the friend of his youth, the friend he was there to meet, and he wondered whether his message had gone astray or whether Aubrey was delayed by the weather.

He had always managed to keep in touch with his friend, and had written to him at intervals all the news, not that the news had ever been anything but bad.

After Aubrey's and Ralph's escape from Blackwater, North and his dragoons had made prisoners of Sir Nigel and Lady Berkeley. He had left them in charge of his dragoons while he had ridden back to make his report. When he returned next day to bring them up to London, he learned they had escaped during the night; how none could say, but fled they certainly had. At Jermyn's instigation, Sir Nigel was attainted as a traitor, and Blackwater confiscated and bestowed upon Jermyn himself.

Once Ralph had received by the hand of an exceedingly good-looking youth, who was very particular in assuring himself that Ralph was really Aubrey's intimate friend, a letter to forward to the exile.

Ralph was most anxious to learn the messenger's name, but the youth avoided all question, only impressing upon Ralph to forward the letter to Master Berkeley by a safe and sure hand.

That letter Aubrey had received when he had been in Holland about two months; it ran as follows:

'MY DEAR SON,—I never thought to find myself pursued as a traitor by a son of King Charles of blessed memory, but so it is. After you had made your escape, those scoundrelly dragoons captured me and left me under a guard while their officer returned to London. In the night, one whom I must call friend, though I had never thought him so, came to me and told me my life was in danger. He effected my escape, having already placed your dear mother in safety, and he has given me a secure refuge, while Blackwater is confiscated, and I am pronounced a dangerous traitor. Thus, my poor boy, you are now a beggar, without money or patrimony. I have been assured by the same friend of your safety, and he has undertaken that you shall get this letter, though how I know not. I am not at liberty to tell you his name, and how all this will end God alone knows. But we are in His hands, so I subscribe myself your broken-hearted father, NIGEL BERKELEY.

'P.S.—Your mother, who, I am thankful to say, is well and wondrous cheerful, sends her fondest love, and says she prays daily for your safety.'

Though Jermyn was unflagging in his endeavours to discover Sir Nigel, from the day when Ralph had sent on the above letter, nothing had been heard of the old baronet until Ralph learnt the news that caused him to journey to Whitstable. He had at

once written Aubrey, telling him the facts, and bidding him return, making an appointment for that very day at the Dolphin Inn, Whitstable.

Darkness had long since fallen, and Ralph had given up all idea of Aubrey's arriving that night, when the landlord came bustling to his room with the news that a stranger had arrived and asked for him by name. Following close on the landlord's heels was a heavily cloaked figure, at whom Ralph gave one glance, then, jumping up and seizing his hand in a firm grip, he cried, 'Welcome once more back to England, Aubrey!'

The two friends stood gazing at one another a moment, then Aubrey said, 'Ay, Ralph, 'tis good to see your face again and to feel I am on English soil. I've made powerful friends, and I've prospered across the water; but I am tired of the dikes and canals of Holland, and long for the lanes and hills of home.'

When Aubrey took off his cloak Ralph noticed that his friend had broadened and filled out, and that he wore a look of calm confidence that was new to him. Soon the two sat one each side the blazing fire.

'I'd almost given you up, Aubrey,' said Ralph.

'I started the minute I had your letter. I saw the princess, asked for leave, and received her orders. Adverse winds have delayed us, and it was only by offering a heavy fee that I could get my skipper to put in to land to-night and get me ashore. It was a ticklish job, but he managed it without accident, and here I am. Now for your news. What of my father? Where is he? What has happened?'

'Alas, Aubrey! I can tell you but little. All I know is that a fortnight ago four of my troopers

were detailed for duty with a small party of dragoons. The whole were commanded by Jermyn, and they rode to Blackwater, which since it was confiscated, Jermyn uses as a country seat. From Blackwater, a dismounted party walked about a mile, and in a lonely part of the road laid an ambush. It was said that two dangerous rebels were known to be passing that way, and, sure enough, presently two men were seen coming along.

'They were taken by surprise; and though they showed fight, were captured and carried to Blackwater. One was said to be Sir Nigel Berkeley, the other a political prisoner of great importance who had long been sought for, but who had until then successfully escaped capture. The four troopers of my regiment were sent back to London, leaving the prisoners at Blackwater. I have been unable to discover anything more, for the only man who could give me any information is Jermyn, and he is as much my enemy as yours. Ever since your escape he has had a grudge against me, and more than half suspects I knew you were masquerading as Fairholt after Sedgemoor. He is always plotting to trap me, and constantly spies on my actions.'

'Well,' said Aubrey grimly, 'I will call him to account for all the evil he has wrought me. I have crossed the sea to do so, and Jermyn shall tell me where my father is if I have to tear the secret from him at my sword's point.'

'I have little cause to love him either,' said Ralph; 'but to supper, Aubrey. I have ordered our host to keep a cold fowl and some ham for you.'

'Twill be a welcome change after the ship's fare, and in truth I am somewhat hungry.'

In answer to Ralph's summons the landlord appeared, and with many a hum and haw regretted that he had been obliged to serve the cold fowls to some other guests he had in the house.

On hearing this Ralph grew very angry. 'Did I not order you to keep one for my friend and me?'

'Your honour, I would have done so, but the gentlemen I have are not those to be put off, and on my saying I had but cold beef they marched into the pantry and, forsooth, helped themselves.'

A light dawned upon Ralph. 'Were the two who were drinking as I came in this afternoon of the party?' he asked.

'They are two, your honour, and two more have since arrived.'

Ralph then bade the landlord serve what food he had, and when he was gone turned to Aubrey, saying, 'I like not the look of those fellows; if they are not bullies from Whitefriars I have never seen any. For some days I have felt I was being watched and dogged, and it would be just like Jermyn to set bullies on to serve his own purposes, whatever they may be; for, truth to tell, I could not get leave to come here, and so I rode off without saying a word, and I fear these men are creatures of Jermyn, or of Sunderland, who suspects everybody.'

'You should not have risked all this, Ralph; a messenger with a note would have done as well.'

'No man trusts another in these days,' said Ralph; 'and a note, were it intercepted, might have put both you and me in a place few escape scot free from.'

'I think we need not fear Sunderland,' said Aubrey; 'in my valise I have two of his letters to the Prince of Orange offering to place James in his

hands. 'The princess fears for her father's safety, and I am ordered by her to expose Sunderland and to put James on his guard against treachery.'

This news vastly astonished Ralph, who had always disliked Sunderland, but had never dreamed he would be false to his master.

Over their supper the two friends exchanged confidences.

Aubrey had fared well in Holland. He was in favour with the Princess Mary, having a post in her household. He shared the confidence of those about the prince, and held honorary military rank. With the affairs of England, from the shoals of refugees always arriving at The Hague, he was well acquainted, so there was small need for Ralph to repeat what he already knew.

'And I can tell you, Ralph,' he continued, 'that before the year is out the Prince of Orange will be not only in England but in London. The whole country will welcome him, and James will either be a prisoner or'——

'Or what, Aubrey?'

'Time will show. Meanwhile, it will be good for you to have a friend amongst the new party.'

Soon the two retired to bed, arranging to be called at four in the morning.

In view of the suspicious characters who were in the house, Ralph fastened the bedroom door; but the lock was old and not to be depended upon. Therefore the friends placed their swords by the bedside, so that they could be seized at a moment's notice, and then in a few minutes were fast asleep.

It was during the small hours of the morning that Aubrey awoke with a start, feeling dimly conscious

that some one was moving about outside the door. He listened, and distinctly heard some one trying to force the lock. He at once roused Ralph, who sat up in bed, then without a moment's hesitation the two slipped on their stockings and breeches, when with a loud snap the door was opened. Several people entered the room, treading silently, but making for the bed. One of the intruders carried a lantern, and by its rays Aubrey and Ralph saw four men, each with a naked sword in his hand. These did not at first notice that the double bed was empty, and hardly had they done so when Ralph called out, 'How now, ruffians, what means this outrage?'

Instantly their leader, in whom Ralph recognised one of those who had been drinking at the bar in the afternoon, cried, 'On them, boys; they must not escape!'

The lantern was placed on a chair, and four sword-blades crossed those of the friends. A fierce conflict began, the semi-darkness making it still more dangerous. Besides being better swordsmen than their opponents, Ralph and Aubrey in their stockinged feet were more surefooted.

The blades rasped and rang, till the man who had held the lantern fell back with a curse, his arm slashed up from wrist to elbow by Aubrey's sword. The other three closed in with a rush; but Ralph deftly tripped one up, and as he lurched, buried his blade in the man's chest. With a scream he fell, coughing up blood. The fellow who had carried the lantern then kicked it over, crying, 'A plague on it. Will's down; save yourselves, boys,' and he made off.

In the darkness that followed, Aubrey and Ralph stood for a moment listening to the retreating footsteps of the swashbucklers.

'See that the man on the ground does not get off, Aubrey,' said Ralph, 'while I strike a light.'

This Aubrey did, and on Ralph lighting the two candles on the chimney-piece it was seen that the wounded man was badly hurt. His face was deadly pale, but he was still sensible.

The noise of the affray had roused mine host, who, in gown and slippers, with a candle in his hand, with eyes almost starting from his head, and with a crowd of terrified domestics flocking behind him, asked timorously what had happened?

'See to this fellow here,' said Ralph. Putting on his boots, and then, seizing a lantern from one of the landlord's followers, he descended the stairs just in time to hear the other three desperadoes dashing out of the inn yard, having taken their departure in such haste that they had forgotten to pay their reckoning.

Ralph again ascended the stairs, and found that Aubrey had lifted the wounded man on to the bed, and having given him some brandy, was tying up his wound.

The landlord and his servants being cleared out, Ralph, addressing the man, who was one of the two he had seen in the afternoon, said, 'You have got a wound here which will lay you on your back for weeks if not for ever. Now, unless you make a clean breast of the motive for this murderous attack, I shall hand you over to justice, which will mean the hangman's rope.'

'Shall I live, captain?' asked the man hoarsely.

'You may, with careful nursing.'

'Will you give me a chance of my life if I tell all?'

'I will not inform against you.'

'Then, captain,' said the man, speaking with

difficulty, 'I had a handful of guineas from a gentleman I will not name, to dog you and whoever you might meet, to attack you both, and at any cost to seize every bit of paper you had about you. My men were going to hold you till news was received from London what to do with you.'

'I suppose this gentleman's name was not Jermyn?' said Ralph with a sneer.

The man did not speak, but nodded his head in the affirmative.

'As I thought,' said Ralph, 'his suspicions have been aroused, and he has had me attacked. We must act at once, for if he should get private speech with the king I am ruined.'

'Before he can get to the king I will have a few words with him,' said Aubrey grimly.

'Where were you to send word to him?' asked Ralph of the wounded man.

'To Blackwater,' he replied faintly.

In five minutes Aubrey and Ralph were fully dressed.

'We must start at once,' said Ralph, 'and must reach Blackwater before the ruffians who have just departed.'

He settled with the landlord, and left a few guineas for the use of the wounded man, bidding the host get him a surgeon. Then mounting, Ralph having provided a horse for Aubrey, they at once started, and breakfasted that morning at Rochester. Procuring fresh horses there, they rode the whole day, nor halted for more than a few minutes at a time till the red roof and tall chimneys of Blackwater were before them.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW AUBREY PAID A DEBT AND RECEIVED AN AUDIENCE.

IT was late when they arrived, but the lights in several windows showed people were still up.

Aubrey and Ralph tied their horses to a tree outside the high wall, which they scaled. Dropping down on the other side, they went towards the house, and crept up to the window of what had been used by Aubrey's parents as a sitting-room. This room was almost on a level with the ground, and Aubrey knew that the window, which was a casement one, could easily be opened from outside with the point of a knife or dagger. Working noiselessly, he effected this, and pushing aside the heavy curtains, peeped into the room.

A bright fire of logs burnt on the hearth, for the night was cold. Before the blaze, in a comfortable armchair—Aubrey's father's chair—sat Harry Jermyn.

Having observed this, Aubrey stepped back to Ralph and whispered, 'You remain here; you will be able to hear, and perhaps see, all that takes place. So long as Jermyn attempts no treachery, do not interfere, but should he call in his servants do as you think best.'

Aubrey, again pushing aside the curtains, passed through the window, moving so silently that he was in the middle of the room before the man by the fire heard him. Then Jermyn leapt to his feet, for a moment alarmed.

'Who are you, and what do you want?' he cried.

Aubrey made no answer.

'Tis said this part is noted for highwaymen and footpads, but I knew not they had the audacity to break into one's very house,' continued Jermyn, recovering from his surprise. 'The lash shall make acquaintance with your back for this, sirrah.'

He moved towards the silken bell-rope, but Aubrey sprang between it and him.

'Stop, Harry Jermyn,' he said, 'I am no highwayman or footpad; your money and jewels are in no danger. I am Aubrey Berkeley, come to demand of you what you have done with my father.'

Jermyn fell back a step, then recognising Aubrey, with a sneer he replied, 'So, Master Berkeley, by trapping the fox we have drawn the cub. I had an idea you meditated this step.'

'And set assassins to waylay me. One met with an accident and lies at Whitstable, the others may be on their way here.'

A slight flush passed over Jermyn's pale face. 'I think you have made a mistake in coming here,' he said.

'It's a good horse that never stumbles, but I do not think that I have made a mistake. Come, tell me, where is my father?'

'Where you may find him sooner than you think for.'

'Where is he?' thundered Aubrey, his wrath rising.

'If I refuse to tell you?'

'Then I will tear the knowledge from you,' cried Aubrey.

Jermyn paused for a moment, then said, 'You would use violence?'

'Ay, and you will stand but a poor chance. With my extra inches and length of reach I have you at my mercy, and I tell you I will not spare you.'

Any allusion to his size, for Jermyn was very short, always irritated him beyond measure; and, gnashing his teeth, he sprang forward to try and reach the bell-pull and summon assistance.

Aubrey again prevented him, and hurled him back, when Jermyn, whipping out his rapier, attacked him violently. Aubrey was, however, ready for him, and their blades crossed with an angry rasp. Jermyn fought with great fury, and, fine fencer though he was, it took Aubrey all his time to defend himself.

'Yo... lout, you,' hissed Jermyn, 'you have crossed my path once too often. I will pay my debt and Talbot's too. If you do not fall under my blade you shall join your traitorous old father in his prison. My evidence is enough to bring the pair of you to the block.'

'In what prison?' cried Aubrey, incautiously dropping his point, when in an instant Jermyn's blade was through the fleshy part of his left arm. The sting of the wound brought Aubrey to himself.

'Ha, ha!' laughed Jermyn; 'your extra inches seem not to avail you overmuch,' and he pressed Aubrey again viciously.

They tramped round and round the room, Aubrey fencing with the greatest care, for Jermyn, besides being a skilful swordsman, possessed a fiery, impetuous valour worthy of a better man.

Once Aubrey's spur caught in the curtain and he made a stumble. Jermyn leapt upon him with a

savage cry of joy ; but Aubrey was just able to parry a lunge made at his throat, and ere his enemy could repeat the attempt he had recovered himself.

Jermyn was getting tired and puffed, while Aubrey was quite cool, and the courtier felt that he must finish the fight as quickly as possible. He tried various tricks ; but Aubrey was not to be tempted to take advantage of apparent openings, and his length of reach enabled him to keep his adversary at a distance.

'Where is my father ?' he persisted ; 'speak, or I will run you through.'

'Boasting braggart !' panted Jermyn, 'do your worst.'

Aubrey pinked him in the thigh. 'Answer my question,' he said sternly.

'Never !'

Again the steel drew blood, this time from Jermyn's cheek, which incensed him greatly, for he was inordinately vain. Feeling himself over-matched, he attempted the Italian trick of dropping suddenly until his left hand and knee touched the floor, then lunging up under Aubrey's guard. By leaping back Aubrey avoided the blade ; and, making a return thrust before Jermyn could regain his upright position, ran him completely through the body. With a cry he dropped his sword and fell to the floor.

Aubrey stooped over him. 'Tell me where my father is, or I will pass my blade through your heart,' he said.

The wounded man made no reply, and Aubrey pressed the point of his sword upon his chest. 'Speak,' he said sternly.

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Leaping back Aubrey avoided the blade.

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And Jermyn, fearful at the last, muttered, 'In the Tower,' just as his senses left him.

'You will give no evidence for some time, I'll warrant,' muttered Aubrey grimly, as he wiped his sword.

Then, after tying a handkerchief round his wounded arm, he rang the bell, in answer to which a servant appeared.

'Your master has met with an accident,' said Aubrey quietly; 'get him to bed at once, and fetch a surgeon, or he will bleed to death.'

The man turned pale to the lips as he gazed upon Jermyn's pallid, senseless form, while Aubrey slipped through the casement and joined Ralph, when they crossed the grounds, scaled the wall, and a few minutes later were galloping away southward.

As they rode, Aubrey was revolving in his mind how to turn to advantage the information he had gained. The fact of his father being in the Tower showed that he had been arrested by the king's orders; moreover, he might be tried and condemned at any moment. James was still secure upon the throne, with the power of life and death in his hands, therefore no stone must be left unturned to secure the liberation of Sir Nigel at once.

Both Aubrey and Ralph were exceedingly fatigued, and now that the excitement which had kept them going through a long day was over, they realised how thoroughly tired they were.

At Barnet they decided to pass the night, and secured a bed there. Next morning they rode into London, and Aubrey told Ralph his determination.

'I shall see the king,' he said, 'give myself up, and plead for the release of my father; his only

crime is having saved me from arrest. James, having got me into his power, can have no excuse for detaining my father.'

Ralph shook his head. 'It is a dangerous experiment, Aubrey; the king never forgets or forgives.'

'Dangerous it is; but it is the only way.'

'I know not yet what will be my fate; if Jermyn has poisoned the king's mind against me I shall be arrested directly I arrive at Whitehall. Under those circumstances you could be of service to me if you are free, and also to your father. You could ride at once to my father and urge him to use his influence with James on my behalf.'

The matter was further discussed, and then it was arranged that Aubrey should put up at his old lodgings at the 'Saracen's Head,' and that Ralph, if things went well with him, should return later in the day; if, on the other hand, Aubrey saw nothing of Ralph for twenty-four hours he was to conclude his friend had fallen into disgrace, and at once to ride off to Hurst Castle to inform Ralph's father.

The 'Saracen's Head' was safely reached, and Aubrey sat down to wait for news of Ralph. That came early in the evening in the shape of Ralph himself, his face showing all was, so far, well.

Jermyn's plans, whatever they might have been, had come to nothing. Ralph's absence had not been noticed, and he had taken up his duties in the ordinary way.

Aubrey insisted upon adhering to his plan, and so the next day he went to Whitehall, where Ralph was on duty, and in the evening, after having waited for some time, Aubrey secured an audience with the king.

His heart beat furiously when he at last found himself alone with that harsh, unbending man.

'Your Majesty,' he began, kneeling at James's feet, 'in past days I was so unfortunate as to fall under your displeasure, and on that account have been absent from England for years. Filial duty brings me back, and I am now here, partly to crave a boon, partly as the emissary of my royal mistress.'

'Who are you?' asked James harshly.

'I am Aubrey Berkeley, sire.'

'Aubrey Berkeley,' repeated James, as though he had forgotten the name. Then he added, 'Stand up!'

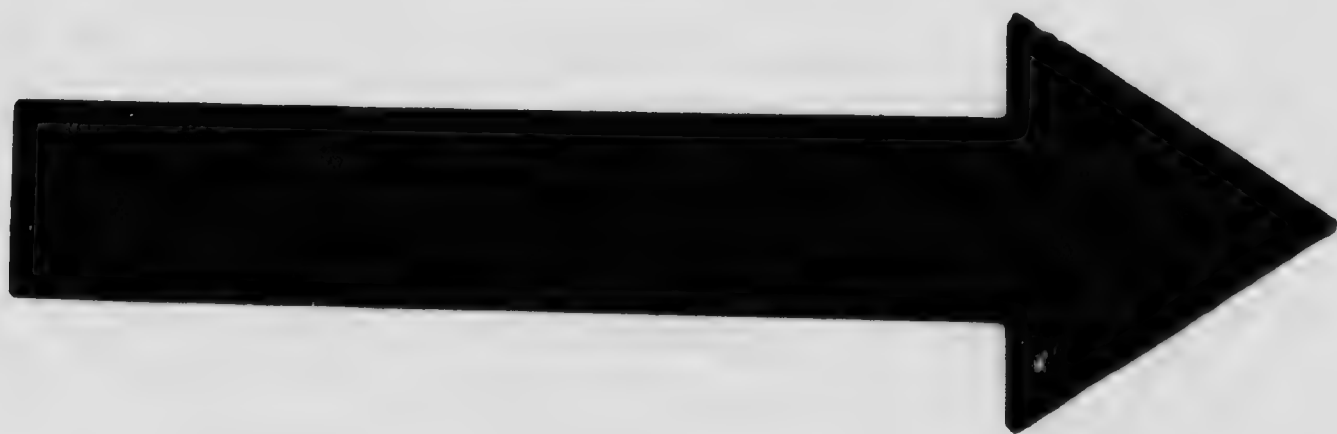
He stared hard at Aubrey's face a moment. 'Ay, ay, I remember you now; you were mixed up with that rebel Monmouth. I tell you, sir, you have done wrong to think a personal appeal to me will help you. I will pardon no rebels.'

'Sire, I make no appeal for myself. I am here to warn you on behalf of one who loves you well. I bring you bad news. The Prince of Orange is going to make a descent on England; your throne, perhaps your life, may be in danger. Call together those friends you can depend upon, for your most trusted Ministers are false.'

James sat up straight in his chair. 'You dare to tell me this to my face! The Prince of Orange to invade us, our Ministers traitors! Have a care, or the boot and rack shall force the truth from you.'

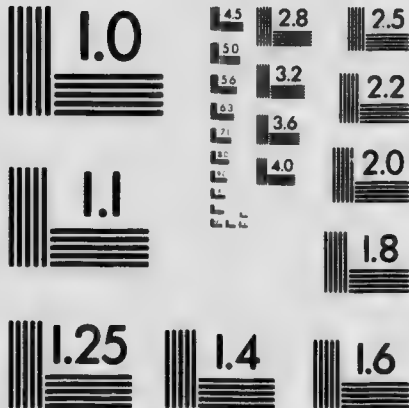
'Alas! all is too true.'

'How know you this? Remember, you are a traitor yourself; my captain of the Guard stands without. Speak nothing but the truth, or you shall



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rue it. You shall repeat your accusation before my Lord Sunderland.'

'He is the greatest traitor of all, your Majesty.'

James turned pale, and stared at Aubrey. 'You are mad!' he cried. 'No sane person dare make such an accusation. Speak the truth; who sent you here, and for what?'

'Your Majesty, I am not mad. I am sent hither by your daughter, the Princess Mary; she fears for your life, and bade me warn you and stand by you. She begs you to remember the fate of your royal father.'

James sat like one in a dream, then he rose to his feet, walking up and down the room rapidly. Presently he turned upon Aubrey. 'I cannot, will not, believe it,' he said. 'The Prince of Orange dares not, *dares not!* And you, villain, you are some spy, some wretch sent to tell me this with a fell purpose. My Lord of Sunderland shall sift this matter; he is as cunning as a serpent in such cases.' Then he cried out for the captain of the Guard.

Ere that officer entered, Aubrey said, 'Your Majesty, you may have me arrested; but I pray you, as with my last breath, beware of Lord Sunderland. He is false.'

'Do you think I will believe the word of a rebel, a fugitive from justice, before that of Sunderland. Your father lies in the Tower charged with a grave offence; you shall join him, for I pardon no rebels.'

'Your Majesty, I am ready to go when you will; but first I pray you read this letter.'

From his pocket Aubrey took the Princess Mary's letter, which he handed to the king. James at once recognised his daughter's hand, and, seating himself,

he read, his face turning very pale. When he had finished, the letter fluttered slowly from his hand to the floor, while his head sank upon his breast, and he sat the very picture of dejection. Presently he asked, 'What proof have you of Sunderland's treachery?'

'I have two letters, sire, written by himself to the Prince of Orange, offering for certain considerations to secure even your royal person.'

James started, then he said, 'I will not believe it; where are the proofs?'

'They are at my inn, sire.'

'Ah, as I thought, this is all part of a plot to deprive me of the services of the one man who is true to me.' Then as the captain of the Guard entered, he said, 'Let my Lord Sunderland be summoned.'

In a few minutes, during which time James never moved, the messenger returned, saying, 'My Lord Sunderland left the palace early this morning, your Majesty; he has not yet returned.'

James looked at Aubrey. 'What do you expect for bringing me these glad tidings?' he asked bitterly.

'Sire, you have said my father is a prisoner in the Tower. His only offence was defending me from your Majesty's soldiers. I am the guilty one; punish me and let my father go free. Your royal daughter laid her command upon me to serve you. If you will trust me I will defend your person with my life, and my father will too, for he has ever been a devoted servant of your house.'

James, turning to the captain of the Guard, said, 'Let my Lord of Sunderland be found and summoned to my presence at once. I will sift the truth of this

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affair. See that Mr Berkeley is securely lodged in the palace—you will answer to me for his safety—until I have tested the amount of truth in his assertions.'

The captain of the Guard requested Aubrey's sword, then, touching him on the shoulder, bade him follow.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW AUBREY FOUND HIMSELF A PRISONER.

AUBREY'S feelings were very mixed when he found himself a prisoner. Ralph's prognostication had come true, and he had deprived himself of his liberty without in the least helping his father. His reflections were bitter as he gazed from the window of the room in which he had been placed upon the dark waters of the Thames, and he began to think he had acted hastily in throwing himself into James's hands.

Next morning he heard the sentry on the door ground arms with a crash; the door was opened, and Ralph entered. When the door was closed Ralph approached Aubrey, making him a sign to speak low.

'I learnt what happened from the captain of the Guard,' he said. 'Do not despond; your friends are at work. Do you remember Lord Lovelace?'

'I have every reason to,' said Aubrey bitterly.

'Well, last night, by the merest chance, I ran up against him. I at once told him what had happened, and he is heart and soul in a scheme for effecting your escape. He says he owes you some reparation for having used you badly three years ago, and he will leave no stone unturned to effect your release.'

'How does he propose to do it?'

'He says he has a hundred fellows in London who will do his bidding at the raising of a finger. He will have a boat on the river to-night, by the garden steps of the palace; it will be manned by half-a-

dozen men who will stick at nothing. They will scale the wall, and get up to this window with a ladder. You will join them, and they will take you down the river and hide you where no one will be able to lay hands on you.'

'And what part do you play, Ralph?'

'I shall be inside the palace walls and will take good care your friends are not interrupted.'

They then shook hands, and Aubrey, his heart beating high at the prospect of escape, sat down to wait for night.

Darkness had fallen some time when the door of his room was opened and a file of soldiers, commanded by an officer, entered. The officer bowed to Aubrey. 'You will accompany me, sir,' he said, 'and you will please make no sound as we pass along.'

'Whither are we going?' demanded Aubrey.

'That, sir, I regret I am unable to tell you,' replied the officer.

There was no refusing to obey the order, and Aubrey got up to accompany the soldiers; when, to his surprise, his arms were fastened behind his back.

'Is this not an unnecessary indignity?' he asked angrily.

The officer shrugged his shoulders. 'I but obey my orders, sir.'

'Whose orders—the king's?'

'I am unable to answer any questions, sir;' and then, to Aubrey's further indignation, he was blindfolded, some one took him by the arm, the soldiers closed round him, and they passed along several passages, down flights of stairs, out into the open, along a gravel path, down some more steps, and into a boat.

After rowing only a short distance, they landed. Aubrey was conducted into some building, up a number of stairs, and his arms being unfastened, was left in a room and heard lock and bolts shot behind him.

In an instant he tore the bandage from his eyes and looked around him. He was in a small, low room, the slanting ceiling of which seemed to prove that it was situated at the top of a house. It was lit by two candles, and there was little furniture besides a table, two chairs, and a heavy bedstead; the window was barred, and the grate was small. This much Aubrey took in at a glance; next he crossed to the window and found that he looked down upon the river, flowing some forty feet beneath him. He was in a riverside house—no part of Whitehall, that was certain.

Aubrey sat long, wondering what this move could portend. He shivered involuntarily as he thought of State prisoners who had in previous times mysteriously disappeared.

His hopes of escape, which had been high, were dashed to the ground. Did Ralph know of his removal? If not, would he find him? To these questions he could find no answer, so he set about testing the strength of the window-bars and the lock of the door. Both were only too strong.

So the night passed and morning arrived. With it came a man who brought food and wine. Aubrey questioned him, but the man made no answer.

'Are you dumb?' asked Aubrey angrily. 'I demand to know where I am detained, and why I am treated as though I were a dangerous criminal?'

'Enemies of the king are dangerous criminals,'

said the man, who, retreating, slammed and locked the door behind him.

During the whole day Aubrey did not see a soul, but at night the door was again opened, and a man entered, carrying a lamp, which he placed upon the table. He was followed by a second man in a cloak, who wore a mask as well as a broad-brimmed hat. The first man, bowing, retreated, the second, keeping well in the shadow, spoke. 'Mr Berkeley, you are a dangerous traitor. Your life is forfeit.'

Spite of the masked man's clever endeavour to disguise his voice, Aubrey at once recognised the thin, high tones. It was Sunderland himself. Without betraying the fact that he had recognised his visitor, Aubrey said, 'What is your business here? Has the king sent for me? I have important news for him.'

'His Majesty will not see you,' replied Sunderland. 'I am commissioned to get from you certain documents you say you possess.'

Aubrey laughed ironically.

'Really,' he said, 'you amuse me vastly. If you refer to certain letters of my Lord Sunderland's to the Prince of Orange'—here the masked man started—'know that the possession of these is my safeguard. If I part with them I cannot prove to his Majesty my truth or Sunderland's treachery.'

'Fool!' said Sunderland, forgetting to disguise his voice, 'do you think you will be allowed again to see the king? You will die the traitor's death you deserve if you are obstinate. Give me the papers, swear to leave the country, never to return, and you shall be free this night.'

'Fool indeed should I be to trust the word of Sunderland. Do you remember receiving a letter

from Monmouth the night before he met his doom ? What did you do with that ? Did the king ever see it ?'

'You know that ?' hissed Sunderland.

'Ay, and much more ; enough to bring your head to the block now before James's reign is over. There is still plenty of time.'

'You will never get a chance of using your knowledge. Know you not that you are entirely in my power here ?'

'Not so much as you think. The letters of which we speak are in safe keeping ; a friend can lay them before the king.'

Sunderland started.

'Do you defy me ?' he cried. 'Have a care ; my word goes far with the king. You have a father a prisoner in the Tower ; it is in my power to persuade the king to bring him at once to trial, and there can be only one result.'

Would you vent your malice on an innocent man ?'

asked Aubrey, whose turn it now was to wince.

The gleam of teeth beneath the mask showed that Sunderland smiled.

'I thought I should find a weak spot in your armour,' he sneered.

Aubrey burst into a passion, and with a sudden movement threw himself upon his tormentor, seizing him by the throat, and shaking him as a terrier would a rat.

'By heaven, I am tempted to choke the life out of you, you reptile !' he cried.

Sunderland gave a loud cry, and the door was dashed open. The attendant, seeing his master struggling with the prisoner, gave a loud cry for help

and ran into the room. He seized Aubrey and tried to drag him away from Sunderland, and for a few moments the three struggled together. Then two more men rushed in, and Aubrey was roughly thrown to the ground and held, while Sunderland made his escape. After some unnecessarily rough usage, Aubrey's arms were fastened, he was pitched on to the bed, and again locked in.

His thoughts were more bitter than before. He realised that Sunderland had, indeed, got him in his power, and he never doubted that he would persuade James to proceed to extreme measures against his father did it suit his purpose to do so.

Next morning Aubrey's arms were liberated, but he was bluntly told that did he give any more trouble his confinement would be made more rigorous; and, realising his helplessness, he chafed wildly against his imprisonment, but could see no way of getting free.

Many days went by, and, shut up in that riverside attic, Aubrey knew nothing of what was passing in the outside world. His impatience increased till he felt he should go mad; the uncertainty as to his father's fate worried him greatly. He formed all sorts of plans of escape, but none of them were workable; his prison was too strong, and he was too well guarded.

At last, just when he felt goaded to desperation, one morning the door was unlocked, and an officer entered. One glance showed it to be Ralph, and Aubrey sprang towards him; but Ralph gave him a warning look, and placed his finger on his lips. When the door was closed, Ralph took Aubrey's hand.

'Dear friend,' he cried, 'I have searched London

up and down to find you, and have now discovered your whereabouts only by accident. A man of my troop learnt the secret from one of the soldiers who escorted you hither at Sunderland's orders. As we have found you, you may rest easy. I have fixed a plan for your escape and to-night you will be free.'

'A thousand thanks, Ralph, for another week here would drive me mad. What of my father?'

'I know nothing of him, except that he is in danger, for Sunderland rules the king in everything. Your old friend Lovelace is still in London. To-night he will be beneath this window with a boat, manned by some trusty fellows. I shall visit you again, bringing under my cloak a silk ladder and some file. We will cut through the bars of the window, descend the ladder, and by to-morrow you can be fifty miles away.'

'But my father?'

'You will serve him best by joining your friends. William of Orange has landed in Devonshire, not a hand was raised to stop him, the country is flocking to him, and he is marching on London. James must grant reforms, and it is hardly likely fresh proceedings will be taken against anybody.'

'This is news indeed; if the prince is here I have friends.'

'Until this evening, then, good-bye. I have got in now under pretence of being a messenger from Sunderland; to-night I will get in again, even if I have to bring a score of my men to batter down the door.' And with a hearty handshake they parted, Ralph to complete his arrangements, Aubrey, sick with anxiety, to sit on his bed and to wait for night and rescue.

CHAPTER XXXI.

OF A FIGHT ON THE STAIRS.

THE days were short and it got dark early. It seemed to Aubrey, after his surly jailer had brought in the candles, that hours passed before a tall cloaked figure entered. Throwing off his cloak, Ralph produced a rapier which he handed to Aubrey.

'This may prove useful,' he said quickly, 'for we must not be interrupted in what we have to do. Lovelace is below, and will ascend to help us to file through the bars of the window. You stand by the door and run any one through who attempts to enter.'

Aubrey drew the weapon from the scabbard and stood just inside the door while Ralph unwound from around his waist a long silken ladder, with two steel hooks at one end. These, after opening the window, he attached to the bottom bar, then let the ladder fall down outside. He next produced files, and at once attacked one of the upper bars. All being quiet in the house, Aubrey sheathed his sword, joined him, and set to work with a second file.

'What we have to do we must do quickly,' said Ralph. 'Sunderland is suspicious. I fancy he must have learnt of my visit here this morning, for one of his people has dogged me about all the afternoon. I only gained admittance to-night by virtue of my rank and after threatening to have a fellow below pilloried for disrespect to his Majesty's uniform.'

While they were busy filing they felt the ladder become taut, and soon the head and shoulders of

Lovelace appeared. Hanging on to the ladder with one hand, he grasped Aubrey's hand with the other.

'I owe you something, Mr Berkeley,' he said; 'we will soon have you out of this trap, and I hope we shall be able to pay that turncoat dog, Sunderland, for some of the scurvy tricks he has played us all.'

He then set vigorously to work with a third file, and presently they had the satisfaction of entirely cutting through one bar, which was removed. They had made considerable progress with the second one when Aubrey cried, 'Hush, some one is at the door.'

Instantly both he and Ralph left their work, and, drawing their swords, ran to the door just as it was thrown open and several armed men rushed in.

'Tis as my lord suspected,' cried one; 'treachery is afoot.'

'Ay, treachery of more than one sort is afoot,' said Aubrey, 'else I should not be here at all.'

'Throw down that weapon at once or will be the worse for you,' cried a man in scented wig and lace ruffles, a fellow of Sunderland's.

'Let us drive them out and barricade the door from inside before they can call assistance,' said Ralph.

The friends advanced, and instantly blades were crossed. The men who had entered were four in number and all carried rapiers. The small size of the room allowed only three of them to attack at once, however, and this was all in the friends' favour. From outside the window Lovelace could be heard anathematising the barrier that kept him from participating in the fight, and encouraging his friends' efforts. Ralph fought coolly and steadily, and the bewigged and beruffled gentleman suddenly gave a

sharp cry of pain and staggered back with a foot of steel in his thigh. A fifth man took his place, a grim-visaged fellow who fought with great fury. Backwards and forwards the combatants pressed, nothing being heard but the heavy breathing, the trampling, and the rasping of blades.

'I know you,' cried one of the men to Ralph; 'you will pay for interfering in my lord's affairs.'

'You may, perhaps, pay a little yourself first,' said Ralph, pressing the fellow hard; but a moment later, giving back against a hot counter attack, he stumbled over a chair and his adversary's sword would have been through him had not Aubrey, with a dexterous turn, unarmed one of his opponents, and, swinging his rapier round in a semicircle, parried the thrust made at Ralph. Before the man could recover, Aubrey, with the heavy steel hilt of his weapon, gave him a crashing blow on the face which stunned him, when, falling heavily against one of his companions, the two came to the ground together.

'Bravely done, friends,' cried Lovelace from the window; 'now on them!'

Ralph had instantly recovered himself, and he and Aubrey literally charged the other two men, driving them back to the door. For an instant there was a jam, then they went through, one man pitching down the stairs in his haste. The man who had fallen in the room scrambled to his feet and made after his companion, and Aubrey and Ralph picked up the man who had been stunned and dropped him down the stairs. Slamming to the door, they dragged the bedstead along in front of it, and placed the table on top of that.

'Sharp work!' cried Ralph; 'now to the window

again.' With feverish haste the three of them worked at the remaining bar, but a furious hammering on the door showed them that they were not to be left undisturbed. The minutes passed, and the bar was almost cut through when one of the panels of the door was smashed in.

'I think 'twould be better to engage these fellows outside,' said Aubrey; 'the staircase is narrow, and we could hold the landing against numbers, having the advantage of position.'

'Well thought of,' said Lovelace; 'do as you suggest. I can finish cutting through the bar myself. Hold them off for five minutes and all will be well.'

Leaving the window, Ralph and Aubrey, moving the bedstead, flung the door wide open.

A number of people were on the stairs listening to one who was speaking from below. Both Aubrey and Ralph saw at a glance that this man was Sunderland, his face pale and set.

'Secure them at any cost,' he was saying, 'alive if you can; but at any cost secure them. They must not leave this house.'

Perceiving the objects of the conversation standing at the top of the stairs, an elegantly dressed young man who acted as secretary to Sunderland cried out, 'Don't be a fool, Tresham; this is my lord's business, and no good will come to any man who meddles with it.'

'Then take your own advice, Haughton,' said Ralph.

Mr Haughton shrugged his shoulders and drew his rapier, as did two other gentlemen who had presumably arrived with Sunderland.

'If you should get hurt you will have only your-

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self to thank,' said Haughton. 'Doubtless you have a ready explanation for his Majesty for having attempted to procure the escape of a State prisoner?'

'As ready an explanation as your precious master has of having unlawfully taken a prisoner from his Majesty's custody,' replied Ralph.

Haughton exchanged glances with his two companions at this, and Sunderland, white with rage, cried out, 'Secure the impudent rogue.'

The three gentlemen, followed and backed up by those who had escaped from the first encounter unhurt, now advanced up the stairs. Ralph had wound his cloak round his left arm and Aubrey held the pillow from his bed; both had their rapiers ready, and awaited the attack. They had extinguished the candles behind them and so had the advantage of being in semi-darkness while their enemies were in the light.

Haughton led the attack, and in a moment had crossed swords with Ralph, while two others attacked Aubrey. The friends fought coolly, and their blades darted to and fro, thrusting, parrying, feinting, and forming a defence which the attackers could not beat down. One of the men from behind, thinking to assist his friends, knelt on the stairs and thrust up savagely, trying to stab the legs of the two friends. Aubrey, however, saw him, and stamping suddenly down, caught the man's sword and snapped it in two, at the same time, with a downward thrust, he took him just above the eye, and with a scream of pain the man rolled down the stairs.

His attention being arrested by the man's cry, Haughton gave an opening, and Ralph's sword flashed through his body.

'I advised you to let this business alone,' cried the young officer quietly.

The others paused for a moment, when Sunderland cried, 'Make an end of the work. Secure them. They shall pay dearly for this.'

The attackers came on all together, but on the narrow stairs they got in each other's way. The swords clashed and rasped, but the advantage was clearly with Aubrey and Ralph, and they managed to protect themselves from even a scratch, while they inflicted several flesh-wounds on those below. These gave way a couple of steps, and the friends followed them, pressing them hard, when in a huddled mass they descended to the landing.

'Come on, gentlemen,' mocked Aubrey, warming to the work, 'come on. Obey your master.—Or would you like to take a turn yourself, my lord?'

Sunderland gnashed his teeth in rage.

'I should advise you to order your horse,' said Aubrey, 'for when his Majesty receives the documents you wot of there will be small time left for preparation. Besides, your price must necessarily be less if you go over to the prince only to escape James.'

Sunderland's men, at these words, looked at one another suspiciously, and the earl himself, with a curse, darted into a room, reappearing in a few minutes with a pair of pistols.

'I will silence their poisonous tongues myself,' he cried; and he immediately fired.

The ball just grazed Aubrey's shoulder, and he leapt back. Through the smoke he saw Sunderland aiming his second pistol.

'Down, Ralph!' he cried, and they both stooped as

the deafening report rang out and the second ball whizzed past them.

Sunderland's men came bounding up the stairs again, but at that moment a heavy footfall was heard in the room behind, and Lovelace dashed out upon the stairs.

'I have removed the bar,' he cried; 'the way of escape is open.'

He saw his friends hard pressed, and running back he seized a heavy chair, which he flung with all his might and with true aim at the swordsmen on the stairs. It crashed on their heads and arms, and with cries of pain they tumbled over one another backwards.

'Quick now,' he cried, and all three retreated into the room. The splintered door was pushed to and the bedstead dragged across it.

'Now for the window,' cried Lovelace; 'down we go one after the other.'

Ralph went first, then Aubrey, and lastly Lovelace. In less than a minute they were all on the ladder descending. The boat beneath was reached, willing hands seized them, the boat was pushed off into the stream, and they were in safety.

'That was sharp work, Aubrey,' said Ralph. 'I question whether we could have held out against that last rush.'

'Which proves that a chair in certain hands is a handier weapon than a sword,' replied Aubrey. 'But what are we to do now?'

'You, Berkeley, I advise to come with me at once to the Prince of Orange,' said Lovelace.

'What of my father?'

'He will be safe enough. James has other things to think of just now.'

'What will you do, Ralph?'

'I shall return to my duty and defy Sunderland. I doubt if he will dare face James again, fearing you will send him the proofs of his treachery.'

'Of course we have him there. Should he do aught against you, tell him I will force my way into James's presence with the compromising letters, even if he hands me to the hangman the next minute.'

They landed higher up the river, made for the 'Saracen's Head,' whence Aubrey took his small portmanteau, then he and Lovelace started for the West, while Ralph returned to Whitehall.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OF AUBREY'S MEETING WITH THE PRINCE.

ONCE London was left well behind, Aubrey and Lovelace put up for the night. Resuming their journey next morning, they rode for two days, coming up with the army of the prince just beyond Yeovil. From the rising ground they saw the big column winding along the road, and Aubrey's heart beat with enthusiasm at the gallant sight. This was no mob of undrilled, half-armed peasants, but an army composed of the finest soldiers in Europe. In the place of such fanatics as had led the unfortunate Monmouth's attempt were to be seen old cavaliers who had fought for Charles the First and shared the exile of Charles the Second, Scottish Presbyterians; stern Anabaptists; and old soldiers of Cromwell, all bound together by a common tie and marching shoulder to shoulder in a common cause.

The van was led by a well-armed troop of English gentry, then came some squadrons of Swedes in black armour, carrying drawn swords. Next was the prince, magnificently mounted and surrounded by his glittering staff, followed by battalions of Dutch foot, a train of artillery, and the British regiments in Dutch pay, commanded by the gallant Scot, Mackay.

Mingled with William's own soldiers marched many a sturdy peasant—burning to avenge Sedgemoor; but these, though allowed to accompany the force, never took any part in the events which followed.

Aubrey and Lovelace fell in at the rear and marched with the army to Yeovil. Almost the first man Aubrey saw on entering the town was Fletcher of Saltoun, who greeted him heartily.

'I came all the way from Hungary to take part in this glorious enterprise,' he said. 'At last our day has come.'

Wade, Wildman, Ferguson,* all were there, but on the outer fringe. The expedition was a military one led by William, the greatest statesman of the age, and by Schomberg, the greatest general. Plotters and conspirators were ignored, and moved only with the camp-followers.

It was Aubrey's intention to report himself to the prince next morning; but as he and Lovelace were supping Captain Van der Straeten entered abruptly.

'The prince requires your instant attendance,' he said to Aubrey.

'I did not know the prince was aware of my arrival,' replied Aubrey in some confusion.

The officer smiled sourly.

'His Highness has eyes and ears everywhere,' he said.

Aubrey at once accompanied Van der Straeten, and was ushered into the presence of the prince, who, with the exception of Schomberg, was alone. One glance at the beak-like nose, high forehead, and piercing eyes of the prince showed Aubrey that he was displeased, and the cold, cutting words of the prince did not surprise him. 'You have failed in your duty, Mr Berkeley,' he said.

'I grieve to hear your Highness say so,' replied Aubrey. 'I have, indeed, been so unfortunate as to

* Note H, 'Robert Ferguson the Plotter,' page 322.

be imprisoned, but the moment I escaped I made my way to your Highness.'

'You got into trouble through pursuing your own ends, I understand.'

'I have a father lying a prisoner in the Tower, his only fault being that he drew his sword in my defence. I offered to exchange myself for my father. I had leave to come to England on private business.'

The prince waved his hand, then continued still more coldly, 'You came to warn his Majesty of his danger. The princess is nervous about her royal father. His countrymen are incensed against him. If they laid hands on him they might proceed to extremities, as they did with Charles the First. It would embarrass the business I have to do to have the responsibility of such a prisoner. I am anxious to avoid complications, and above all bloodshed; this will be best accomplished if his Majesty were to leave the country. You have managed this business clumsily, Mr Berkeley.'

Aubrey saw at once that the instructions the princess had given him were known to the prince, as he might have guessed had he given the matter consideration, for the Princess Mary had no thoughts away from her husband. He also knew that in great enterprises William allowed no personal matters to sway him; and he felt that the life of his father would not be considered in the great game being played. He bowed, and briefly related what had happened. The prince again waved his hand.

'Clumsy and ill-advised,' he said. 'His Majesty doubtless had reasons for detaining your father, nor can I promise you that I can use any influence I may have to secure his release or the restitution of

his property. I am not here to interfere in private matters. You, Mr Berkeley, will have a chance of redeeming your mistake. Look well round to-morrow, note the numbers and quality of my troops. Then speed back to London, frequent the coffee-houses, say I am marching on the capital, that his Majesty's troops cannot be depended on, that *his most trusted generals* are trying to make terms with me, and that his Majesty's best course is flight. If, when I reach London, *James is not there*, your late conduct may be overlooked.'

The prince's meaning was too apparent to be misunderstood, and Aubrey returned to Lovelace, but did not tell him what the prince had said. Next morning he mounted his horse, and on the third night was in his old quarters at the 'Saracen's Head.'

London was in a state of great excitement. James had gone to join the army at Salisbury. News was hourly expected, and on the result of the engagement—did one take place between the troops of William and James—many half-hearted ones were prepared to shape their future conduct. The frequenters of the coffee-houses discussed with bated breath the latest news that came up from the West, each succeeding rumour being more disturbing than the last. First there had been a skirmish between the king's troops and the prince's, in which the former had been worsted. Then a large number of noblemen declared for the prince and went over to him. Then came rumours of wholesale desertion amongst the troops.

To cap the news from the West came the discovery that the Princess Anne had fled from London, escorted by Bishop Compton, attired in buff coat and jack-boots, and armed with sword and pistol.

James, rendered hopeless by the desertion of his troops, having given up all thought of fighting, returned to Whitehall the very day his daughter fled. This news seemed the last drop in his cup of bitterness, and he completely broke down.

From that day every hour brought fresh news of disaster to the House of Stuart. William's progress was a triumphal march; the few trifling skirmishes he had always ended in his favour. The country hailed him as a saviour, and flocked to him in thousands, the troops went over to him in regiments, and so, without a hitch, he reached Hungerford, where he halted.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW AUBREY SERVED THE KING.

SPITE of what he had suffered at James's hands, in his present predicament Aubrey felt genuinely sorry for the almost deserted king, and was filled with contempt for those creatures like Sunderland and Churchill, whom he had loaded with honours, but who at the first breath of misfortune had basely deserted him. Nor was Aubrey altogether free from fear as to what might happen to the king did he fall into the hands of his enemies, for certainly there were many round his Majesty who, to curry favour or even reward from William, would have laid violent hands on the person of their lawful sovereign.

Aubrey was sitting in his room on Sunday evening, a week after his return to London, when Ralph, who had formed one of the escort of James back from Salisbury, entered the room.

'Anything fresh?' asked Aubrey, looking up.

'Yes; the king has honoured me with his confidence. He is sending the queen and the Prince of Wales out of England. Those who should stand by and help him remain aloof, saying they dare not meddle in an affair of such moment. I have no such scruples; the safety of the king and his family is all I care for, and my sword and life are at his Majesty's service. Will you assist me in this enterprise, Aubrey?'

'Will the king accept my assistance?'

'I told him you would stand by me; and since

Sunderland's treachery* has been discovered the king can no longer doubt you. His friends having proved false, he is the more likely to trust his open enemies.'

Remembering the Prince of Orange's instructions, Aubrey replied, 'Then you can depend upon me,' and together they went to Whitehall.

Ralph was at once admitted to the king, and he took Aubrey with him. James, his hands behind his back, was tramping up and down the room, his head bent forward, evidently deep in thought. He looked up and coloured slightly as he saw Aubrey.

'Tresham tells me you are willing to help me, Mr Berkeley,' he said.

'My services are at your disposal, your Majesty,' replied Aubrey bowing.

'Look you, ther,' said the king in great agitation, 'I am surrounded by enemies, by spies. The prince wants to get me into his power, then he will do to me as Cromwell 'id to my father. My troops are false to me, parliament would impose on me conditions which I would not endure. I will reign absolute, or not at all. When the queen and my son are safe I will fly either to Ireland or France. Now, will you swear to stand by me?'

'On my word as a gentleman.'

'Then return here,' said James eagerly, lowering his voice, 'one hour before midnight, armed and cloaked. Say not a word of this to a soul. And, let me see, you craved some favour, did you not?'

'My father's liberty, sire.'

'Yes, to be sure; I had forgotten. I will look into the matter by-and-by, by-and-by,' he repeated,

* Note I, 'Treachery of Sunderland,' page 323.



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'I confide to you my son,' he said.

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as he waved his hand to Aubrey in token that the audience was at an end.

The king and queen retired to rest as usual, and Aubrey and Ralph repaired to the ante-room at the appointed hour. Presently James, in a loose gown, entered.

'Go at once to the end of the corridor,' he whispered to Ralph, 'and bring hither Lauzun.'

Ralph did as he was bidden, and finding the Count Lauzun, a French refugee, returned, when James led them all into the bedchamber. The queen, wrapped in a long cloak, was waiting, trembling, with two of her women, one of whom held the poor little infant, which was wrapped in a shawl. The king took the child and handed it to Aubrey.

'I confide to you my son,' he said, 'and to you, Lauzun, my queen. Everything must be risked to carry them to France.'

The whole party then stole down the back-stair and gained the river entrance to the palace. It was a bleak, wild night, and the rain poured in torrents. Aubrey wrapped the poor little Prince of Wales in his cloak, and held him tightly to his chest, the innocent babe sleeping soundly. On the river was an open skiff, and in this they embarked, crossing the river, whose waters were blown into rough waves by the roaring wind. At Lambeth they landed and proceeded to an inn where a coach and horses should have been in readiness. The horses were, however, a long time being harnessed, and the queen, afraid of being recognised, would not enter the house. She took the child from Aubrey and cowered for shelter from the storm under the tower of Lambeth Church. Her two women stayed with her, and Aubrey remained

to protect them, while Ralph and Lauzun hurried up the coach.

Suddenly, from the darkness, two men appeared ; and one, pushing up against Aubrey, peered into his face. The other, seeing the cowering ladies behind, said, 'Hallo, my gay spark, who are these wenches ?'

'Get about your business, fellow,' said Aubrey fiercely, 'or you will rue it.'

The man, however, tried to push by him, while his companion tore away the veil from the queen's face.

The ladies screamed with affright, and Aubrey struck out with his fist at the man next him, and catching him under the ear, felled him, stunned, to the ground. Then seizing by the waist him who had dared to lay hands on the queen, Aubrey, nerved to a tremendous effort by his excitement, lifted him completely off his feet, carried him some yards, then hurled him from him, the man falling with a crash that must have jarred every bone in his body.

Lauzun, then returning with the coach and two saddle horses, the ladies and he got inside, Aubrey and Ralph mounted, and they galloped away for Gravesend, which they reached in safety.

There a yacht, having aboard some friends of the king and a number of Irish officers, was waiting ; and the queen being got on board, Aubrey and Ralph waited till they saw the vessel speeding on her way down the river before a good wind, when they spurred back to convey the good news to the king, at Whitehall.

James expressed the liveliest satisfaction at the result.

'I shall defeat them yet. I shall defeat them yet,'

he kept repeating. Then to Aubrey, 'I shall not forget your services, Mr Berkeley.'

Aubrey thought this an opportune moment for the king to have shown some clemency with regard to his father; but as James said nothing, he determined to wait a day or so before he again mentioned the subject.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW SETH TALLET REDEEMED HIS PROMISE.

THE next day Aubrey did not see Ralph, who was on duty at the palace. On the following morning, contrary to his usual custom, Aubrey slept late. He was awakened by loud shouts from outside his window, and jumping up, was dressing himself in haste in order to find out what was the matter, when Ralph entered the room.

‘What is the matter?’ asked Aubrey.

‘Everything is the matter,’ answered Ralph. ‘The king has fled.’

‘Fled!’ cried Aubrey incredulously.

‘His Majesty departed for France at three o’clock this morning,’ continued Ralph, ‘taking with him the Great Seal, which it was his intention to cast into the river. The troops have been either disbanded or have declared for the Prince of Orange, and the country is without government of any sort, while London is at the mercy of the mob.’

‘After what I have done for James,’ said Aubrey bitterly, ‘this is his return! to leave my father to die in the Tower, or to spend the rest of his days in prison, for all he cares.’

‘Let us go at once to the Tower,’ said Ralph, ‘and see what is happening there.’

As they proceeded, crowds of dangerous men, ripe for any mischief, were rushing along the streets. Disbanded soldiers, who had, however, retained possession of their arms, were collected in groups,

forming a menace to any who might thwart them. All shops and houses were closed.

With much trouble Aubrey and Ralph reached the Tower, but the sentries stood on guard, with lighted matches, threatening to fire on any who tried to gain an entrance. The garrison was afraid, and resembled an enemy in the midst of a hostile city.

Aubrey and Ralph returned to Whitehall, where everything was in the greatest confusion. The mob were beginning to loot and to wreck houses. At night great bonfires blazed in every street, drunken soldiers rolled about in tens and twenties, a rumour got abroad that some Irish soldiers had turned upon the defenceless citizens and were slaughtering right and left, and a night of terror was passed.

In the morning Aubrey procured an order to admit him to the Tower and see the governor. Armed with this, he and Ralph started out, this time going mounted and well armed. To avoid the crowd, which was getting more and more dangerous, they made a detour to the east, going round by the docks. They were making their way through Wapping when a tremendous uproar met their ears, and ahead of them they saw a great crowd, amongst whom were many seafaring men armed with bludgeons, surging, roaring, and raging.

Being mounted, Aubrey could see that the crowd seemed to be ill-treating a man dressed as a sailor, whom they had just dragged from a small beer-house. He was being pulled and pushed, beaten and thumped, while a hundred voices yelled, 'Stone him!' 'Stab him!' 'Rend him from limb to limb!'

A fresh volley of blows fell on the unfortunate wretch, then, with a hiss and a roar, the shouts burst

out again as a very tall man, dressed like a seaman, seized him, and throwing a rope round his neck, dragged him towards the sign of an inn, from which it was evidently his intention to hang him.

'We must do what we can to save the fellow,' said Aubrey, and he and Ralph spurred their horses in amongst the crowd, which scattered right and left. Aubrey gained the man's side and bade him who held the rope release his victim.

The fellow stared at Aubrey a moment, then burst into a loud laugh.

'Well mouthed, my master,' he said, 'but to no purpose. It's a long cry back to the shambles at Dorchester, but I have waited. I have promised this villain I'd be even with him, and now he's mine.'

He gave the rope a savage tug which pulled his victim off his feet.

'Heavens, can it be Seth Tallet?' cried Aubrey, recognising in the captor the son of the old man who had been unjustly sent to death by the notorious Jeffreys.

'Ay, 'tis I,' replied Tallet, 'and in the same old leathern doublet this scoundrel made fun of.—Now boys, to the sign with him.'

'Save me, save me! for God's sake, gentlemen, keep these demons off!' shrieked the unhappy wretch, holding out his hands towards Aubrey and Ralph.

Aubrey looked at the filthy object clad in a collier's garb, black with coal-dust; and in spite of his grimy, blotched, and drunken visage, from which the eyebrows had been shaved, his wigless head going bald, and his writhing lips, he recognised by the savage eye and cruel mouth Lord Jeffreys, the Chief-Justice,

the Lord High Chancellor, the savage murderer of the western peasantry.

The shock of the discovery rendered Aubrey for a moment incapable of thinking; then a fury of yells burst out.

'Tear him to pieces!' 'Give me a leg!' 'His heart for me!' 'Rend the rogue and sell him bit by bit!' 'To perdition with him! to perdition with him!'

A fresh volley of blows fell upon Jeffreys' frame, racked with the excruciating agony of an incurable disease; the blood trickled from his face and head, and Tallet dragged him along.

Jeffreys roared out to Aubrey and Ralph for help.

'Unhand him!' cried Aubrey, drawing his sword. 'Murder must not be done; let him be fairly tried.'

A howl of rage went up from the mob.

'Give him to us; he is ours!' they yelled. 'Rend him! hang him!'

'Ay, I'll not let him go,' said Tallet grimly.

Ralph drew his sword and spurred beside Aubrey; together they cleared a space round Jeffreys, who continued to bawl for mercy.

'You may take him before a justice,' said Aubrey, 'but you shall not murder him.'

A mob of several hundred persons pressed in on the intrepid pair, but their horses stood them in good stead, the frightened animals, lashing out with their iron-shod hoofs, keeping off the crowd.

The tumult grew louder, and stones began to fly, when the flash of halberds was seen, and a company of the City train-bands turned into the street.

The mob tried to beat out Jeffreys' brains with their bludgeons. Tallet tried to strangle him with

his own hands; but Aubrey and Ralph beat back the crowd with the flat of their swords, and the train-band rescued Jeffreys from Tallet just as his eyes were almost starting from his head, and his tongue was protruding from his swollen mouth.

Jeffreys begged to be conducted to the Tower for protection; and after he had been taken before the Lord Mayor (whom the shock of seeing the terrible Jeffreys before him sent into fits, which in a few days ended fatally), the wretch, escorted by militia, was conducted to the Tower in a coach, the crowd yelling and hooting, and throwing every description of filth at him, when at last he lost consciousness from sheer fright.

The baffled crowd swarmed round the gates of the Tower and defied the attempts of the soldiers to break through them, all the while yelling out for Jeffreys' life, and pelting the coach with a thousand missiles. Presently a troop of cavalry arrived, the Tower gates were opened, and Jeffreys was got inside the Bloody Tower, which he was doomed never to leave again alive.

Aubrey and Ralph sought the governor, and told him what had occurred. Jeffreys himself also gave an account of the affair. He related that when James had fled, fearing for his life, he had determined to leave the kingdom. He had bribed the skipper of a collier to take him to Newcastle. On the night before he had got aboard in disguise, but the mate had recognised him and told his enemies ashore, who had been on the lookout for him. Tallet, who was in Wapping, went to a justice of the peace and obtained a warrant for his arrest. Taking the alarm, Jeffreys in the morning had got ashore again; but

seeing an alehouse, the 'Red Cow,' in Anchor and Hope Alley, his unquenchable thirst overcame him, and he entered, calling for beer.

Tallet boarded the collier, only to find that Jeffreys had escaped him; satisfied, however, that his prey could not have got far away, he rowed back, and with an angry crowd at his heels was searching up and down, when, chancing to look in at the 'Red Cow,' he there found the wretch he sought. Jeffreys was dragged forth, and in a few moments, had not Aubrey and Ralph saved him, his evil life would have been ended.

After this recital was finished, and Jeffreys had been placed in a cell, Aubrey asked the governor about his father, and learnt that he was indeed a prisoner in the Tower, but that he was well treated. The governor said he dare not let Aubrey see Sir Nigel without an order, but that he would bear a message to him. As no persuasion of Aubrey's could alter this decision, he and Ralph left the Tower.

A tremendous wind was blowing up the river, and, in fact, had been blowing for several days. Suddenly Aubrey reined in his horse.

'Ralph,' he cried, 'I have an idea!'

'What is it?'

'The king is said to have gone down to Rochester on horseback, thence to take boat for France.'

'Yes.'

'Well, in the teeth of this wind no vessel could put out from the river.'

'Zounds! I believe you are right.'

'Something tells me the king is still in England.'

'And if he is?'

'Then I will seek him out and obtain my father's pardon.'

The two young men looked at one another a moment, then they moved as by one impulse.

'Cross the river by the ferry,' said Ralph ; and that done, they turned their horses' heads eastward and galloped off as if Jeffreys, armed with his old terrors, had been pursuing them.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HOW AUBREY EARNED SIR NIGEL'S RELEASE.

WITH only very short halts for rest, Aubrey and Ralph galloped on all through the day. Dartford, Gravesend, and Chatham were passed; at Emley Ferry they heard that a party of horsemen had crossed in the morning.

'They must be those we seek,' said Aubrey; and he and Ralph also went across.

It was then nearly midnight, and when they got on to the Isle of Sheppey their horses were dead-beat. As they near'd an inn facing the water they heard a great hubbub of voices. Several boats were landing passengers from a hoy which was waiting for the tide to hoist anchor. By the tones Aubrey guessed the speakers were fishermen, and would have taken little notice had not a loud voice shouted, 'They are spies, take 'em before a magistrate. This lean-jawed fellow is a traitor I'll swear.'

The crowd were roughly pushing along a man, who cried out, 'Gentlemen, gentlemen, let me go. I will give you fifty guineas to let me go.'

'Great heavens, Ralph, that sounds like the king's voice!' cried Aubrey. 'Let us follow.'

They entered the inn with the rabble, and in the smoky light of the lamps saw a tall man dressed in black being roughly handled by the fishermen.

'It is—it is the king!' cried Aubrey, and in a moment his bared sword was in his hand.

'I am the king,' said James, hearing Aubrey's

voice. 'Let me go, the Prince of Orange is hunting for me and will take my life. Let me go, or my blood will be upon your heads.'

'Follow me, Ralph,' cried Aubrey; and, with a strength which surprised him, he buffeted the rough fellows right and left. Angry voices snapped out, blows and kicks were rained upon them, but they gained the king's side, struck down those who held him, and, valiantly facing the crowd, kept them off with their swords.

'Back! traitors!' cried Aubrey. 'Would you dare lay hands upon his Majesty?'

'Hark at the mad knave!' said a brawny sailor, 'he calls him "majesty." I say he is a spy. Drag him before a magistrate.'

He attempted to seize James, when Aubrey ran him through the body. The scream of the man as he fell and the sight of his blood roused the temper of his companions. They attacked the two young men, while the king covered his face with his hands. Aubrey and Ralph would soon have had the life beaten out of them had not a fisherman, who had served in the navy under the king when Duke of York, recognised him.

'Hold, messmates,' he cried; 'there is a mistake. This gentleman is the king.'

Instantly the crowd desisted from their attack, and James sobbed aloud. The rough fellows assured his Majesty they were sorry, implored his forgiveness, and said they would not hurt him.

The king began a lengthy harangue, told them he had been misjudged, and rambled on as though his mind had given way under the strain.

At last the room was cleared, when the king

turned to Aubrey and Ralph, who were faint from loss of blood, and said, 'To you two gentlemen I owe my liberty, perhaps my life. I will not forget you—I will not forget you.'

Then he recognised Aubrey, and a faint tinge of colour crept into his pallid cheeks.

'You have a boon to ask, I know, Mr Berkeley,' he said. 'You have atoned for your past errors. Your father shall be set at liberty and restored to his possessions if it is my last royal act.'

Aubrey attempted to bow, but fell at the king's feet in a faint. James helped to bring him to, and by that time one or two loyal gentlemen from the neighbourhood had appeared, and the king retired.

Aubrey and Ralph spent the night on the floor outside his door. Next morning the inn was surrounded by an immense concourse of people, many of whom insisted upon seeing the king.

During the day, with his own hand James wrote an order to the governor of the Tower to release Sir Nigel Berkeley, and gave Aubrey a letter restoring his father to his confiscated estate of Blackwater.

That night a troop of horse from Sittingbourne arrived, when James announced his intention of returning to London in accordance with the wishes of most of his loyal advisers. Aubrey and Ralph would have remained with him; but James said they had done enough for him, and were to speed on with the news of his intended return.

Aubrey wanted no second bidding, for there was no knowing what might happen during the next few days; the king's signature, even, might be no longer respected, so he and Ralph set out, and in due course reached the Tower.

The governor received with respect the order for release, and Aubrey was conducted to his father. He found him very comfortably lodged and looking well. When Sir Nigel beheld his son he rushed into his arms, and was for a moment too full of emotion to speak. Then they sat down to a long talk, after which Sir Nigel delightedly prepared to depart.

As they were passing along a stone passage on their way to the governor's quarters, where Sir Nigel's discharge had to be recorded, they heard terrible screams and cries proceeding from one of the rooms.

'Heavens, what is that?' asked Aubrey. 'Surely prisoners are not tortured now.'

'That torture is self-inflicted,' replied the governor.

'What is it? I have several times heard these ravings during the last few days,' said Sir Nigel.

The governor beckoned to a warder to open the door of the room they were passing, when they all looked in. A terrible sight met their gaze. A figure, half-clad, with bloodshot eyes and a face livid and purple in streaks, sat on the bed, tearing at the neck of his shirt, while his eyes stared with an indescribable horror, and perspiration, in spite of the severity of the weather, ran down his face.

One glance showed Aubrey that the repulsive figure was that of the once terrible Jeffreys. He was raving and screaming, occasionally jumping up and rushing round the room as though pursued by a legion of furies.

Catching sight of Aubrey and Sir Nigel, he leapt from his bed, and cowering in a corner of the room, cried out, 'Keep off, keep off; 'twas not my

fault that you were hanged; my master bade me do it. I was no' half bloody enough for him.'

Aubrey stepped into the room, when Jeffreys screamed, 'Avaunt, avaunt, keep off; the others are following—tens, scores, hundreds—all with halters round their necks and their insides gaping open, grinning and waiting to tear me. Away, away!'

The terror on the wretched man's face was awful to behold, and Aubrey backed towards the door.

Jeffreys seeing this, darted to the table, seized a stoneware jar that contained brandy, and with shaking hands pouring out a cupful, tossed it off like water.

'That stuff should be taken from him,' said Aubrey; 'it only aggravates his disease.'

'He cannot live without it,' said the governor; 'he will have it.'

Hearing the governor's voice, Jeffreys broke into a whine more terrible to those who knew him than his roar.

'I served my master; I was bound to do so; I was told to show no mercy; I was even reprimanded for my leniency. Give me drink, drink!'

The governor went to remove the jar from his reach, when Jeffreys started back, dashing himself against the stone wall.

'Tis Sidney and Russell. Keep off, keep off! I had my orders, I tell you, and it was the price I had to pay for my seat on the Bench.'

'Unhappy man!' cried Aubrey; 'may the Lord forgive you!'

Again the mind of the unjust judge wandered; he thought the mob, headed by Seth Tallet, was upon him.

'Keep them away,' he yelled; 'they will tear me

to pieces; save me, save me!' and cowering in a corner, he glared madly about, a frothy saliva issuing from his cruel mouth, his eyes glaring, till with a moan he fell forward senseless.

'For Heaven's sake, let me get away from this awful spectacle,' said Sir Nigel. 'I see the hand of God in this. Human ingenuity could never have invented a punishment so just or fitting. Let us be gone.' *

The door was closed on the terrible Jeffreys, and Aubrey never saw him again. For three months he lived, racked with unspeakable agony, alternating between fits of raving madness and the deepest despair, till, worn out body and mind, he died like a dog, unattended and unlamented, and was pushed with loathing and disgust into a hastily dug grave.

The formalities with the governor being completed, Aubrey and his father left the Tower, and made their way to an inn in the city.

That night there was no happier man in London than Aubrey as he sat listening while his father gave him an account of all that had happened to him.

'And wonderful some of the things were,' said the stout old cavalier. 'After you left Blackwater I was captured, as you know. My rescuer was none other than mine old enemy, Colonel Somervell. He took me and your mother to the Manor House, which was, of course, once our own, and we lay there securely hidden, till by a mischance Somervell and I were captured, through a rascal of a servant who had been discharged from the house turning traitor. It was by Somervell's own request that I did not

* Note J, 'Judge Jeffreys,' page 324.

mention his name to you, as he has long been sought for by James, who would assuredly have had his life. The fewer who knew his secret the safer. Our trial was fixed for next month, and I doubt not we should have both lost our heads. As it is, my first task shall be to use every endeavour to secure the colonel's liberty.'

This was, of course, all astonishing news to Aubrey, and he and his father talked far into the night relating their different adventures.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW AUBREY SERVED BOTH THE KING AND THE PRINCE.

THE next morning James once more arrived at Whitehall. He was received by the people sullenly, without either surprise or enthusiasm. The day passed uneventfully, a sort of expectant calm having settled upon London.

In the evening, Aubrey, entering St James's Park on his way back from Kensington, came upon a squadron of cavalry and three companies of infantry, the latter marching with lighted matches.

They were the prince's troops, and from the commander Aubrey learnt that their orders were to take possession of all the posts round London.

With this alarming news he galloped at once to the palace and was admitted to James's presence.

The king was listless and depressed; he received the information without emotion, ordering that under no circumstances were his troops to make any opposition to the prince's.

'Do you, Mr Berkeley, remain here,' he said. 'I may have need of you later on.'

The Coldstream Guards, who were on duty at St James's, were inclined to resist the prince's troops; but the officer in command, being a very tactful man, a rupture was avoided, and they retired. By eleven o'clock the prince's troops held every post round London.

The king retired to rest, and Aubrey was in the

ante-chamber when Lord Lovelace and several others entered with a message from the Prince of Orange.

'The king is asleep, my lords,' said Aubrey firmly; 'he cannot be disturbed.'

'Our message admits of no delay,' replied Lovelace grimly; 'wake him, or we shall.'

The lord of the bedchamber came out, and at last consented to arouse the king, when the deputation entered.

Lord Lovelace handed the king a letter. James glanced at the bearer. 'Ah,' he said, 'you have played me many a trick before; I might have expected this from you.'

'I shall never play you another trick,' answered Lovelace; 'this is the last.'

The letter was to the effect that the Prince of Orange would be at Westminster in a few hours, and that James would do well to leave Whitehall before ten the next morning.

James, with a shrug of his shoulders, said there was nothing for him to do but consent; and, saying he chose Rochester as the place he would go to, lay down and went soundly off to sleep again.

As Lovelace, with a smile of triumph, passed Aubrey, he whispered, 'Remember, James is to be given every opportunity to escape. You will go with him and aid him in everything.'

'I quite understand,' said Aubrey, 'and at the same time I shall do my best to protect his Majesty from annoyance.'

The next morning was rainy and stormy. The king breakfasted alone, then with a few gentlemen descended to the royal barge, which was moored against the Whitehall Stairs. Round it were a dozen

boats, filled with Dutch soldiers. Without any ceremony or one farewell glance at the palace he was never to see again, James embarked, and they started down the river.

Aubrey was amongst the gentlemen who accompanied the king; but Ralph's health had broken down under the recent strain, and he was confined to his bed.

As they passed down the river, brigade after brigade of the prince's troops was pouring into London. The three English regiments in Dutch pay marched along the river-bank parallel with the royal barge, to take up their quarters at the Tower, and the three Scotch regiments, with bayonets fixed, colours flying and drums beating, were crossing London Bridge on their way to their quarters in Southwark.

Crowds from the banks watched the Royal departure, but there were no signs of sorrow. Every hat was adorned with a bow of orange-coloured ribbon, and from the top of every flag flew an orange streamer.

The journey to Rochester was a most miserable one; but at last the town was reached, and the king installed with what comfort could be procured. He was negligently guarded, and was allowed to go almost where he liked, and to do what he pleased. At once he began to talk about making his escape.

'They murdered my father,' he said, 'and they will murder me. I fear for my life. I will go to my wife and child in France, and then let them beware—let them beware.'

At the last Aubrey was a prime mover in his escape. He arranged with the skipper of a smack to carry the king across to France; and taking into his con-

fidence the young Duke of Berwick, who was in constant attendance upon the king, their plans were laid.

That day the king retired to rest as usual, but in the dead of night arose and dressed himself. Attended only by a few gentlemen, he stole out of the back door and crossed the garden to the shore of the Medway. There he embarked in a small boat, which went down the river, while Aubrey and two others rode along the river-bank. Early on Sunday morning a smack was reached, and the king, with his friends, embarked, immediately setting sail for France.

There was not a soul in sight, and Aubrey, sitting on his horse, watched the vessel putting out over the gray and lumpy sea. His heart was sad and heavy for the self-exiled king; but new hope was springing up within him, for his own future looked happy.

Sir Nigel was again a free man, and restored to his Blackwater estate. His enemy Jermyn was now powerless to harm him, and Jeffreys would never leave the Tower alive. With the Prince of Orange and the party who would be in power he was on good terms, and he wished nothing better than to go to Blackwater and to settle down there quietly with his people for the rest of his life.

His meditations were broken by the sound of a horse's hoofs; he turned, to behold an armed horseman approaching, his eyes fixed upon the fast disappearing vessel.

Instantly Aubrey recognised Colonel Hall, and in surprise inquired where he came from and how he got there.

'I come from the Tower of London,' answered the colonel, 'and I came on horseback. I am glad to arrive in time to see yon vessel departing, which, if I am not mistaken, contains the last of England's tyrants.'

'It contains his Majesty the King of England,' said Aubrey with dignity.

'King no longer,' replied the colonel. 'By his own act he has abdicated, and the crown he has resigned will never again be worn by a Stuart king of England. The liberty of the nation is secured. My life's work is finished. A new era opens before us, tyranny and injustice are over, the liberty of the subject is secured, and England, no longer the servile pensioner of France, shall take her place amongst the greatest nations of the world.'

'Colonel Hall, I think our paths separate here,' said Aubrey. 'We have nothing in common together.'

'And yet I have some claim on your gratitude. I would I had also on your affection, for I love you as a son.'

'I do not understand you.'

''Twas I who saved your father from his enemy Jermyn; 'tis I who have given your mother a welcome asylum ever since. 'Twas I who was arrested with the valiant Sir Nigel, whom I have ever admired as a true and high-minded gentleman, and who has now been instrumental in obtaining my release.'

Aubrey now stared in astonishment. 'Then you are'—— he said.

'Richard Somervell,' answered the colonel.

For a moment Aubrey paused; then he wrung the colonel's hand.

'I am too much beholden to you to bear any resentment for your treatment of me,' he said.

'And I can show you that all my actions have been influenced by a desire for your welfare. My daughter is, with one other exception, the only relative I have. You saved her life years ago, and for that deed I vowed always to befriend you and yours should it ever be in my power.'

A glimmering of the truth dawned on Aubrey.

'Whither do you go now?' he asked.

'Back home, which I hope never to leave again.'

'Our road is the same; shall we ride together?'

'With the greatest pleasure in the world,' and they turned their horses' heads towards London.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

OF THE END OF IT ALL.

IT was on the Sunday before Christmas that Aubrey and Colonel Somervell rode up to London. The weather was very cold, but bright. The brooks and ditches were frozen, the roads were like iron, a keen wind blew, but above was a clear blue sky.

During that ride Colonel Somervell told Aubrey his life-story

His father had been a staunch Puritan, and as a lad Colonel Somervell had fought for Cromwell. 'I was against the execution of Charles the First,' he said. 'The moment the king's head fell the restoration of the second Charles was assured. When Cromwell made himself king in all but name I separated from him. To save the country from being divided amongst Cromwell's generals the only thing was to call back Charles, and I joined with General Monk. But Charles the Second had been spoilt by his many years of continental wandering. Every kingly quality within him was killed, the gratification of every passing desire, at any cost, even at that of his country, was all he cared for. I fell into disfavour, and had to fly. The Manor House proved a good hiding-place. It was given out that I was abroad; so I was at times, but frequently I returned to the Manor House, and always knew all that was going on. I was in Holland when Monmouth's invasion was planned. I came over to

make arrangements; when, travelling from London with Lord Lovelace, I came upon you valiantly defending Lady Wentworth. There is no doubt that Ferguson, who was in the plot, sold the secret to James. The lady was known to have important papers on her that would have incriminated most concerned. Your actions saved them. I recognised you, for unknown to you I had often seen you at Blackwater. I was sorry to find you mixed up with the affair, and when I heard from Lady Wentworth that you knew nothing of the plot, begged her not to involve you in the attempt. I joined Argyll, and when his badly managed expedition failed, came down to warn Monmouth. Foreseeing how his attempt must end, I determined to save you, and it was I who had you kidnapped by Nehemiah Hulks, an old and trustworthy friend of mine, to keep you out of mischief; in fact, I helped to snare you.'

Aubrey coloured with anger at the thought of that; then, a thought suddenly flashing across his mind, he said, 'Do you know who the boy Lance is—no, I mean the girl Lance—at least, Dame Hulks said she was a girl?'

'I know her,' replied Colonel Somervell gravely.

'Can you tell me her name and where she is?' asked Aubrey eagerly.

'I am not at liberty to do so.'

'More mystery!' cried Aubrey impatiently.

'Why do you want to know?'

'Well, he was—I mean she—that is, I have so often thought of her, I am most curious to see her again.'

'Once more could make but little difference,' said the colonel dryly; 'mayhap she is by now married.'

But to my tale,' and he explained how, after Monmouth's defeat he had returned to the Manor House, and how, with his daughter's help, he managed to lie there concealed. He had heard the firing at Blackwater when Aubrey had to fly for his life, had found out what had happened, and with the servants' help managed to get the soldiers intoxicated and rescue Sir Nigel and his lady.

'We were all safely hidden at the Manor House,' he went on, 'and your father, after he had got over his first dislike of me, was very happy. I was in communication with The Hague, and gave them much information, in return hearing all about your doings. It was I who sent young Tresham the letter to forward to you, telling you what had happened to your father. A servant at last betrayed the fact that Sir Nigel and I often rode at night between St Albans and Hatfield, and we were captured.'

But to this latter part of the colonel's story Aubrey paid little heed. He felt a strange heaviness about his heart when the colonel said Mistress Lance was mayhap married, and from time to time he sighed deeply.

It was late when they reached London, but Sir Nigel welcomed them most heartily.

The next morning Aubrey sought out Ralph, whom he found much better, but still not able to sit his horse. He wanted to go home to his father's till it should be decided what was going to happen to the country. They arranged that he should travel by coach, and that Aubrey should go with him.

That same day they all started, Sir Nigel and the colonel going to St Albans, while Aubrey went on

to Hurst Castle, promising to join them at the Manor House directly he had seen Ralph safely home.

Leaving his friend happy in the midst of his rejoicing family, Aubrey, on the following day, started for the Manor House.

It was Christmas Day, and a lovely, bright morning. The church bells were ringing merrily as Aubrey approached Blackwater. It had been arranged that he was to go straight to the Manor House; but when he saw the dear old house at Blackwater he could not resist the temptation of going inside. The door was open and the place seemed deserted.

Aubrey crossed the well-remembered hall, and entered the room where he had wounded his old enemy, Jermyn.

To his surprise he saw, standing in the window-recess, a female figure wearing hood and cloak as though just come in or going out.

At the sound of Aubrey's spurs she turned, and he beheld a tall and beautiful girl. He doffed his hat and bowed.

'Pardon me,' he said, 'I had no idea any one was here; I thought the late possessor had departed. You are doubtless of his family; but you will, perhaps, pardon my intrusion when I tell you this was my father's house, and has, in fact, just been restored to him.'

The lady made no reply, but cast down her eyes, when Aubrey, looking at her, gave a great start.

'Why, Lance; no, I beg your pardon—of course it can't be—but I once knew a boy—no, a girl I mean—so much resembling you that the likeness startled me.'

'I am Cicely Somervell,' replied the lady coldly.

'Can it be the little girl I once saved from drowning? I am Aubrey Berkeley.'

'We have both much altered since then, I think,' she said, not having anything better to say.

'Yes,' sighed Aubrey.

'You have been abroad I hear, and have, I dare say, returned full of foreign fancies and admiration for foreign customs.'

'No; I return fonder of my native land and of my countrymen than when I left it, and I hope to spend the rest of my days here.'

'Indeed,' she said innocently. 'I thought my father said you were sighing after some lady knight-errant whom you had met abroad.'

'Did Colonel Somervell tell you that?' asked Aubrey. 'No, indeed, the Dutch beauties have no charm for me. This same Lady Lance, for I know not what her real name was, I met in England, and I have often wished to meet her again. Yet, Mistress Somervell, you do bear so remarkable a resemblance to what I have thought she would be like in woman's dress, that—that'——

'Sir, I do not understand you. Was she not a woman then?'

'In truth, when last I saw her she was dressed as a boy; in fact, I thought she was a boy; but'——

'I will listen to no more,' cried Cicely, in apparent indignation, and taking a handkerchief from a small bag which hung at her waist she held it before her face. As she did so Aubrey glanced at her ungloved hand, and, could it be—yes, it was—his very ring upon her finger!

'Lance, Lance! no, Cicely, I mean,' he cried, in an

ecstasy of joy, and seizing her hands he gently forced them from her face and looked down at her.

For one moment she turned her blushing face up, and whispered, 'Are you not ashamed of me, and have you not forgotten me?'

'Ashamed of you, I—I—— But do you, will you ever care for me?' he asked.

'Do you think I should have worn your ring all these many, many months if I did not?' she whispered.

Aubrey took her in his arms. 'Of all the strange things which have happened to me,' he cried, 'this is the strangest. But how came it to happen?'

'Listen! My father, as you know, has lived long as a fugitive, and often we have both been abroad for months at a time, but frequently we returned to the Manor House, where we lived very quietly. My father often had to travel in haste, and it was safer for me at times to assume the disguise of a boy, passing as his son. During the poor Duke of Monmouth's invasion my father came to the Manor House, and had at once to go north, but he wanted a message taken to Lady Wentworth, and I promised to carry it. I was in my father's confidence, and Lady Wentworth told me you were at Crewkerne, and that she wanted a letter conveyed to you, but that she had no one she could trust to take it. 'I was going on to Nehemiah Hulks for my father, so I said I would take your letter. But before I called at the inn where you were staying I changed my boy's dress, for I thought you might recognise me, and—and'——

'You were ashamed of hose and doublet?' laughed Aubrey.

'Perhaps; but I did not see you.'

'Had you done so how different things might have been.'

'Oh I didn't care then; it was not till my father had you brought to Hulks' house'——

'You were among those who trapped me,' said Aubrey. 'I remember your voice now.'

'I went to see fair play,' she laughed. 'Then you escaped, and that terrible Sedgemoor happened. I was afraid you might be killed, and as it was through my fault you escaped I made Nehemiah ride with me—and—the rest you know. Dame Hulks, when she gave me the ring, told me she had betrayed my secret, and I often wondered if you thought of me; and—and—I have never thanked you for saving my life at Sedgemoor. I lay long at death's-door, but a strong constitution and a good surgeon restored me to health.'

'For which I thank Heaven,' cried Aubrey, again taking her in his arms just as footsteps sounded behind them, and Colonel Somervell with Sir Nigel entered the room.

'Aubrey!' cried the old baronet in surprise, 'what means this?'

For a moment the four stared at one another; then Colonel Somervell said, 'I can, perhaps, explain it, Sir Nigel. If what I hope comes to pass, you will gain a dear daughter and I a son.'

'But,' blurted out Sir Nigel, 'they are almost strangers.'

'We have known one another for years, sir,' said Aubrey, smiling. 'It is a long tale and a strange one'——

'And one that can be better told round my fire-

side,' interrupted Colonel Somervell with a smile.—'Aubrey, your father and I, with Cicely, thought we would just walk over here before dinner and see how Blackwater had been left, for Jermyn went only yesterday.'

'Well, now let us all get back to the Manor House,' suggested Cicely. 'I am sure Lady Berkeley is dying to see her son.'

'After which we will hear Master Aubrey's tale,' said Colonel Somervell.—'Sir Nigel, it had always been my intention to will the Manor House and the estates back to your family when I died. I think now it will hardly be necessary to wait till then; they will go better as a marriage portion, and then once again all these broad lands will belong to a Berkeley.'

'What say you, children?' asked Sir Nigel.

Cicely hid her blushing face and said nothing; but Aubrey replied, 'What should you say, father?'

'That I was the happiest man in the world, and that the dearest wish of my heart had been fulfilled,' replied the hearty old cavalier, though there was a slight tremor in his voice and a suspicious dimness in his eye.

That Christmas Day there was no happier party in all Britain than that gathered round the great oak table in the hall of the old Manor House of the Berkeleys.

NOTES.

NOTE A.—TITUS OATES.

Few more infamous characters than Titus Oates disgrace the pages of English history. Born at Oakham about 1649, he was once a curate in holy orders; through his criminal conduct, however, he was compelled to quit his curacy, and for years led a vagrant life in London and on the Continent, for some time professing himself to be a Roman Catholic, but being eventually expelled from the colleges both of Valladolid and St Omer with disgrace. Returning to England again, with one Dr Tonge, he concocted the so-called Popish Plot, into which, in course of time, other unscrupulous scoundrels were drawn.

That sane Englishmen should ever have been led away by the glaringly inconsistent and palpably false statements of Oates only proves to what lengths of credulity religious fanaticism will lead a people. Through Oates's testimony over thirty victims were done to death. His perjuries were levelled at the highest as well as the lowest; the Duke of York, and even the queen herself, being accused by the impudent impostor.

Oates became enormously popular with the masses, was called the Saver of the Nation, handsomely lodged at Whitehall, and awarded a pension of four hundred and eighty pounds a year.

In 1684 he was charged with a libel against the Duke of York, and when Judge Jeffreys awarded the duke damages to the amount of one hundred thousand pounds it was equivalent to a sentence of perpetual imprisonment against Oates. He was cast into prison, where he remained till the accession of James the Second, when the king, not being satisfied with a sentence of imprisonment only, had him tried for perjury, a crime in those days much more severely punished than now. Jeffreys was again the judge, and this time his inhuman severities were unchecked. Oates was convicted upon two indictments, and received one of the most brutal sentences recorded in English law. He was to pay a fine of one thousand marks upon each indictment, to be stripped of his canonical habit, to stand twice in the pillory, to be whipped from Aldgate to Newgate one day, and two days afterwards from Newgate to Tyburn, and to stand in the pillory on five days in

every year as long as he lived. The 'whipping' part of the sentence and the standing in the pillory were carried out in every detail.

During his first flogging, Oates's bellowings were frightful to hear; he swooned several times, and was insensible when cast back into his dungeon. After an interval of only forty-eight hours he was again dragged forth; but he could not stand, and was hauled to Tyburn on a sledge, receiving more than one thousand seven hundred lashes on the way. No man ever deserved hanging more than did Oates, but that such a barbarous punishment should have been inflicted upon him, largely out of a spirit of revenge, was a disgrace to our courts. That he survived such savage treatment is almost beyond belief; but his body was as tough as his soul, and he lived to enjoy a pension under William the Third, and to see passed the Bill of Rights, one article in which condemns 'all cruel and unusual punishments.'

NOTE B.—MONMOUTH'S POPULARITY IN THE WEST.

The duke's progress through the western counties in 1680 was more like a royal progress than that of a subject. He was attended by a large retinue, who paid him the deference usually given to sovereigns only. When he approached a town he quitted his coach and rode into it on horseback, the nobility and gentry riding before him in a band, being followed by the duke riding alone and at a distance, the tenants and servants bringing up the rear. Two hundred covers were prepared wherever he dined; and the populace were allowed to enter at one door, pass by their idol, and go out at another door, while he was dining.

He entered with great zest into all the country diversions, and, being wonderfully agile, ran races himself on foot; and when he had outstripped the swiftest of their racers he would run again in his boots and beat them, though they ran in shoes. The prizes which he won in the day he gave away at christenings in the evening.

The bells were rung, bonfires made, and volleys of firearms discharged wherever he came, the populace waving their hats and shouting, 'A Monmouth! a Monmouth!'

Macaulay relates that after being entertained by Thomas Thynne at Longleat Hall, 'the hedges were lined with shouting spectators from Longleat to Exeter. The roads were strewn with boughs and flowers. The multitude, in their eagerness to see and touch

their favourite, broke down the palings of parks and besieged the mansions where he was feasted. When he reached Chard his escort consisted of five thousand horsemen. At Exeter all Devonshire had gathered to welcome him, and a company of nine hundred young men clad in a white uniform marched before him into the city.'

After being so received there is little wonder that Monmouth in 1685 counted a great deal upon his popularity in that part of the country. Nor had he anything to complain of in his reception by the common people. More constant in their affection than the farther-seeing upper classes, they flocked to him in their thousands, and laid down their lives for their favourite with a touching devotion that raised them to the rank of heroes.

Long after the duke had met his fate, Macaulay relates how 'Ribands, buckles, and other trifling articles of apparel which he had worn were treasured up as precious relics by those who had fought under him at Sedgemoor. Old men who long survived him desired, when they were dying, that these trinkets might be buried with them. Such was the devotion of the people to their unhappy favourite that, in the face of the strongest evidence by which the fact of a death was ever verified, many continued to cherish a hope that he was still living, and that he would again appear in arms.'

NOTE C.—THE RISING IN THE NORTH.

The invasions of both Monmouth and Argyll were planned in Holland; both ended in dire disaster, but the greater magnitude of the former dwarfed the importance of the latter.

The Earl of Argyll had been condemned to death on a pretext which caused Lord Halifax to say to Charles the Second, 'I know nothing of the Scottish law; but this I do know, that we should not hang a dog here on the grounds my Lord Argyll has been sentenced upon.'

How Argyll escaped from prison in the guise of a page bearing up the train of his step-daughter, and crossed over to Friesland, is too well known to be repeated here.

When the descent from Holland upon England was planned, Argyll was chosen to lead the Scottish attempt; but from the first he met with opposition. Sir Patrick Hume and Sir John Cochrane, both exiles, were jealous of the choice made, and to them much of the blame attaching to the failure is due. Ayloffe

and Rumbold, two Englishmen, were to accompany Argyll, as two Scotsmen, Fletcher and Ferguson, were to accompany Monmouth.

Argyll made a good passage and effected a landing, but from the very beginning there were always delays and bickerings among his so-called advisers. MacCallum More, by which name Argyll was known in the Highlands, sent round the fiery cross to the clansmen, and about two thousand Highlanders joined him; but his presence became known at Edinburgh, his leading henchmen were arrested on his arrival, and preparations were made to repel him. After a few ineffective skirmishes, he was pushing on for Glasgow when a body of troops was encountered. Argyll was for giving battle; but Hume, Cochrane, and others insisted on a retreat under cover of darkness. Through a guide losing his way, the Highlanders got on to swampy ground, confusion ensued, and the men deserted in hundreds. Hume and Cochrane crossed the Clyde in safety with about three hundred men. Hume ultimately reached the Continent; Cochrane was captured, but afterwards purchased his freedom.

Argyll, in disguise, was captured at Inchinnan, in Renfrewshire, whence he was taken to Edinburgh. He was treated with every indignity, dragged through the streets bareheaded, and condemned to death on the old indictment. He met his fate with the most heroic fortitude, refusing, under the threat of torture, to disclose the names of any of his confederates. The picture in the House of Commons portraying the unfortunate earl enjoying a calm and peaceful sleep an hour or two before his execution, while a Privy Councillor, who had demanded admittance, stands conscience-stricken looking at him, is well known. He was beheaded on 30th June 1685, and his head was stuck up on the Tolbooth.

Rumbold was severely wounded before he was captured. He was dragged to Edinburgh; and though the wish of the Government was that he should be executed in England, it was evident that he could not stand the journey, and must be executed in Scotland or not at all. He was accordingly tried, convicted, hanged, drawn, and quartered, all within a few hours, the execution taking place near the Cross in the High Street.

Ayloff was taken prisoner and conveyed to Glasgow. After attempting to kill himself with a penknife, he was brought to London and interrogated by the king, who was most anxious to obtain the names of the ringleaders. Ayloff would not speak, however, and James, getting out of temper, said, 'You had

better be frank with me, Mr Ayloff. You know that it is in my power to pardon you.' To which Ayloff replied, 'It may be in your power, but it is not in your nature.' He also was executed under an old sentence, and died with great composure.

NOTE D.—LORD GREY.

Forde Grey, Baron Grey of Wark, Northumberland, had a chequered career. In his younger days he was a brilliant man of fashion. Nobly allied, of handsome presence, distinguished manners, and more than ordinary talents, a splendid career seemed before him. Committing a grave crime, however, he was tried and found guilty. Again, in 1683, he was under arrest, charged with others with assault on the Lord Mayor at the election of sheriffs for the City of London. On that occasion he was fined one thousand marks. He was arrested a third time, as being concerned in the Rye House Plot, and on this occasion was lodged in the Tower. By making some of his jailers tipsy he effected his escape and fled to Holland, whence he returned with the Duke of Monmouth, who gave him the command of the cavalry. He has been accused of pusillanimity in the field, but on that point conflicting testimony exists. When, after Monmouth had been interrogated by James, Grey was introduced to the presence he bore himself bravely, neither making excuses nor asking for mercy. James is said to have been very favourably impressed with his demeanour. His life was eventually spared on his giving a bond for forty thousand pounds to Sunderland and smaller sums to other courtiers. On the assurance that nobody should die upon his evidence, he afterwards told all he knew of the rebellion. Leaving England, he returned with William of Orange, under whom he took an active share in politics, and in 1695 was created Earl of Tankerville. He died in 1701.

NOTE E.—THE DUKE OF MONMOUTH.

Monmouth was married in 1663 to Anne Countess of Buccleuch, the pair on their wedding being created Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch. Monmouth's honours were forfeited by his execution, but those possessed by his wife in her own right remained unaffected by the attainder. Monmouth was survived by two sons; and from the elder of these, James Earl of Dalkeith, the present Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry is descended, being the seventh in direct descent from the unfortunate Monmouth.

NOTE F.—'KIRKE'S LAMBS.

The regiment commanded by Colonel Percy Kirke, which earned such unenviable notoriety after the battle of Sedgemoor, was the Queen's or First Tangier Regiment. It was raised in 1661 and sent to Tangier. As it was destined for service against an infidel foe, the badge on its colours and on its appointments was the Paschal Lamb. For twenty-two years it was constantly engaged against hordes of barbarous enemies in a warfare where no quarter was asked or given, and officers and men doubtless developed a ferocity utterly incompatible with civilised warfare. Such was the regiment loosed upon the poor Western peasants, in whom, though their own countrymen, the soldiers simply saw a foe to be treated with the severity they had learnt in their Tangier campaigns. That many atrocities were committed by 'Kirke's Lambs' is certain; equally certain is it that these atrocities have been exaggerated. The old First Tangier Regiment is to-day known as the Queen's or Royal West Surrey Regiment of infantry. It still bears as its badge the Paschal Lamb, to which has been added the Sphinx, which it earned by its gallantry in Egypt in 1801. From 1689—when the regiment, still under the command of Kirke, broke the boom across the Foyle and so relieved Londonderry—down to the Boer war, the 'Lambs,' which nickname they still bear, have done splendid service for the Empire, as the honours—Vimiera, Corunna, Salamanca, Vittoria, Pyrenees, Nivelle, Toulouse, Peninsula, Afghanistan, Ghuznee (1839), Khelat, South Africa (1851-2-3), Taku Forts, Pekin, Burma, (1885-87), Tirah, South Africa (1899-1902), Relief of Ladysmith—which they bear on their colours proudly testify.

NOTE G.—MR KIFFIN AND THE HEWLINGS.

There is nothing more pathetic in the whole history of Monmouth's rebellion than the fate of the two youths, Benjamin and William Hewling. Their grandfather was most passionately devoted to them, and their sad fate broke his heart.

In the last months of King James's reign, when he began to fear the results of his high-handed measures, and was eager in trying to propitiate all classes of his subjects, he passed the celebrated Declaration of Indulgence.

Among those singled out for distinction was William Kiffin, the grandfather of the Hewlings, and an influential man among

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the Dissenters. He was offered an alderman's gown, which he indignantly refused, and he tells us in his *Memoirs* how, the courtiers having failed to persuade him to accept the honour, King James sent for him to Whitehall.

'I have put you down for an alderman of London, Mr Kiffin,' said his Majesty.

'Sir,' replied the old man, bursting into tears, 'I am worn-out; I am unfit to serve your Majesty in the City. And, sir, the death of my poor boys broke my heart. That wound is as fresh as ever. I shall carry it to my grave.'

The king, thoroughly abashed, stood for a moment silent, then said clumsily, 'Mr Kiffin, I will find a balsam for that sore.'

The poor old man long refused all offers, but was at length compelled to accept an alderman's chain, because there was no limit to the fine which might have been imposed upon him for continued refusal.

NOTE H.—ROBERT FERGUSON 'THE PLOTTER.'

Robert Ferguson was a remarkable product of an age noted for intrigue. Born in Aberdeenshire, he was educated for the Church, and, coming to England in 1655, held the living of Godmersham, in Kent, but was expelled under the Act of Uniformity in 1662. He then supported himself by 'teaching boys grammar and university learning' at Islington.

Ferguson's unquenchable love of plotting and conspiring soon got him into trouble, and he was imprisoned in 1663 for various treasonable practices. On being released he turned religious controversialist and political pamphlet-writer. He was mixed up with the Rye House Plot, and the result of the plot—which happily failed—has been attributed to the fact of Ferguson turning informer.

Ferguson escaped, with but little difficulty, to Holland, where he spent the next few years of his life. He sailed from the Texel with Monmouth's ill-fated expedition, and was responsible for the drawing up and issuing of those manifestoes in which Monmouth claimed the throne and denounced James as a usurper. It was the gross insults levelled at the king in these declarations that made James so bitter against Monmouth, and probably had much to do with his refusal to pardon him, or at least, to spare his life.

After Sedgemoor, Ferguson, with his usual 'luck,' managed to escape to Holland. He came back with the expedition of William

of Orange, but that prince did not at all favour his underhand methoda. He, however, managed to obtain the post of house-keeper of the Excise, worth about four hundred pounds a year. Even that did not cure him of his mania for plotting; he intrigued with the Jacobites, and was mixed up with the Montgomery plot; but, as usual, so cunningly had he acted that nothing could be actually proved against him, and he was discharged. Entering into communication with the Court at St Germain, he was at last arrested in 1692, and lost his position in the Excise.

From that time onward Ferguson was mixed up with almost every political plot of notoriety, and was many times arrested, but always managed to escape punishment. His later years were spent in great poverty, and he died in 1714.

NOTE I.—TREACHERY OF SUNDERLAND.

Some of the heaviest blows which fell on King James were those inflicted by his own children, or by those friends and servants on whom he had heaped favours. Among the latter the Earl of Sunderland was easily first; to him James had always been a kind and indulgent master, and had thrust upon him honours and money till Sunderland was the most powerful as well as the wealthiest subject in the land. Of his base treachery there is not the slightest doubt. Fearing to be involved in James's downfall, he entered into correspondence with William. Letters from the Countess of Sunderland, written with the full cognisance of her husband, are still extant, and conclusively prove his guilt. He was even base enough, after having publicly espoused King James's religion, to offer to deliver his king into the hands of the Prince of Orange; and it is to the latter's credit that he coldly refused the treacherous offer.

In spite of many warnings and even of positive proofs, James refused to believe in his favourite's treachery, and it was the flight of Sunderland which at last opened the unfortunate king's eyes.

Sunderland escaped to Holland in the disguise of a woman, remaining there till 1691. After the infamous Jeffreys, he was the man best hated in England. In 1691, after many vicissitudes, and another change of religion, he returned quietly to England, but did not appear in public till 1693. He became Lord Chamberlain, and acted as the head of the Government under King William, but retired from public life in 1697.

NOTE J.—JUDGE JEFFREYS.

George Jeffreys, first Baron Jeffreys, the 'Unjust Judge,' was utterly devoid of principle, was of drunken and extravagant habits, and reckless of everything save his own advancement. A master of scurrilous invective, he was brutal to those who came before him, but fawning and cringing to those from whom he hoped or expected any favour.

Educated for a lawyer, during his student days he was distinguished for his dissipated and intemperate habits. On being called to the Bar he first practised at the Old Bailey, where, though his legal learning was small, his powerful voice and command of vituperation gained him a large practice. By currying favour with those above him, he obtained the post of Common Serjeant of the City of London, and later of Solicitor-General to the Duke of York, being knighted in 1677.

For his overbearing manner as counsel he was often severely reprimanded, and on one occasion his conduct was commented on in the House of Commons, when Lord Delamere declared that 'Jeffreys behaved himself more like a jack-pudding than with the gravity which becomed a judge.'

Jeffreys had to submit to a reprimand on his knees at the bar of the House, and to resign the Recordership of the City, which he then held. He was mainly responsible for the condemning of Lord William Russell, and entirely so for the barbarous sentence passed on Titus Oates. He was created Lord Chief-Justice in 1683, and Baron Jeffreys in 1685. Of his conduct during the 'Bloody Assize' enough has been said in the foregoing pages. The total number of his victims was about three hundred and twenty.

By a curious coincidence, after his death in the Tower of London, Jeffreys' body was stealthily pushed into a hole hurriedly dug next to Monmouth's grave. He was thus buried by a few keepers on a Sunday night, in fear lest angry crowds should rush in and do some violence to the body.

Four years later his remains were removed to Aldermary Church; hence the dust of the noble victims buried in the Tower is not polluted by that of the 'Unjust Judge.'

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